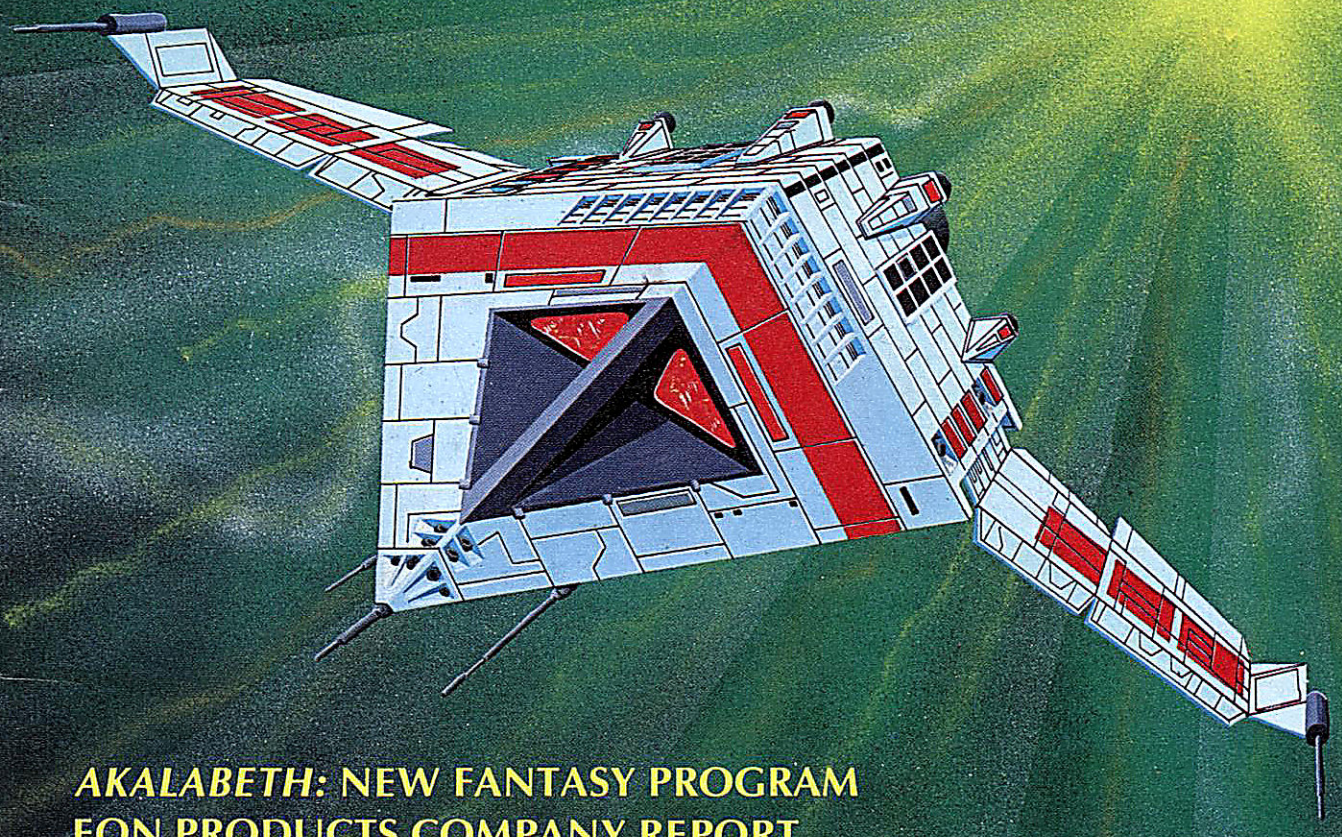
FEBRUARY 1981 NUMBER 36 $2.00

THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

THE FIRE WEB

Artifact for *TRAVELLER*



AKALABETH: NEW FANTASY PROGRAM
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ORIGINS AWARDS NOMINATIONS BALLOT
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STAR FLEET BATTLES VARIANT
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THE SPACE GAMER

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In This Issue

Our cover story is "Pawn of the Fire Web," by K.L. Jones, who is new to our pages. Following the story you'll find Fire Web specs for *Traveller.* The Web is an interesting weapon – but I don't envy those of you who run into it . . .

The Company Report this month is from Eon Products, one of the game industry's small-but-successful specimens. Their *Cosmic Encounter* was an instant hit; their new *Quirks* (see the capsule review in this issue) may be another. (By the way, we'll probably have a featured review of CE and its expansion kits in the next issue.)

Other goodies in this issue include a new and simpler combat system for *Star Fleet Battles*; a featured review of the new computer game *Akalabeth*; and a "Game Design" segment on combat systems.

And, on page 30 – this year's Origins ballot. Remember to vote. If you happen to remember TSG, Cardboard Heroes, and our games when you vote . . . well, that's all right, too.

–Steve Jackson

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WHERE WE'RE GOING

If you're a subscriber to TSG, you can skip this section – it doesn't affect you at all. But if you buy your copy at the store, keep reading. Effective with issue 38 – April – we're changing distributors. This means that if a store is going to keep on selling TSG, it needs to

(a) place an order with one of the big hobby distributors (there are several that will be handling us now), or

(b) write to us directly and place a standing order with us.

So – if you want to make sure you'll still be able to pick up TSG at your store, go jog the owner. Remind him to place a new standing order. Otherwise, come April, you won't be able to find TSG. I *hope* you think that would be a disaster. I do.

* * *

The February issue of *Analog* contains a Poul Anderson story, "The Saturn Game." It's something every role-playing gamer ought to read. Not just because it's a good yarn – Anderson's always are – but because it dramatizes one of the less attractive aspects of gaming.

"The Saturn Game" tells about a crew of interplanetary explorers who while away the years of their trip with computer-assisted fantasy games. As they become more expert, they can even dispense with the computer; their trained imaginations no longer need the holographic images. They can enter their fantasy world whenever they choose.

The tragedy comes when some of the explorers become trapped in their fantasy – not in some science-fictional metaphor, but in a very believable and human way.

Most of the people who read "The Saturn Game" will dismiss it as "just" science fiction. I'm not sure; I've seen too much role-playing. I know that role-playing can be good for an introverted personality; its lessons carry over into the real world. But

what happens when more carries over than the lessons?

I'm not going to quit gaming. But the story's a good one . . . and disquieting. Read it for yourself.

–Steve Jackson

GAME MASTER

G.E.V.

In GEV, how does terrain affect attacks against tread units? Also, can a disabled CP make an attack during overrun, and if so, at what strength?

–Henry Cobb

Terrain affects tread units, for defensive purposes, just as it affects any other component of an Ogre – see the Terrain Effects Chart.

As for the CP: Rule 6.131 states that CPs have an attack strength of 1 in an overrun, and that disabled units fire at half strength. Therefore, a disabled CP would have an attack strength of ½ when attacked by overrun. Treat this like any other attack strength when computing odds – i.e., ½ attacking 1 is a 1 to 2 attack. Clearly, a disabled CP will not be much use except against infantry.

–Steve Jackson

Kung Fu 2100

Shouldn't there be a provision in *Kung Fu 2100* to let Terminators increase their abilities if they survive one or more games? And why can't Terminators use guns?

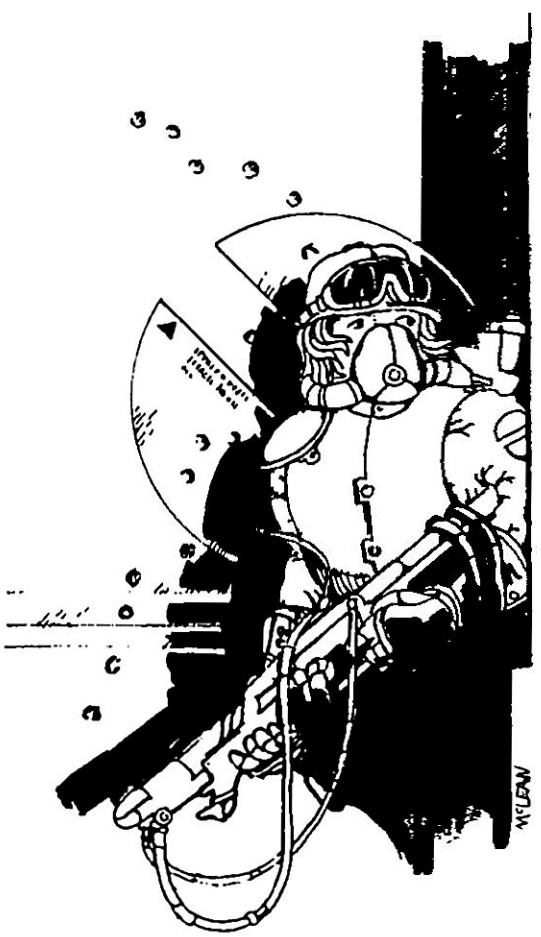
–Lafe Ketter

One future possibility is a role-playing system based on KF 2100, *in which abilities could increase. However, note that Terminator abilities are the product of years of training. A single attack on a CloneMaster, though arduous, is only one night's exercise, and wouldn't do a lot to increase abilities. A figure ought to have to survive several games before it becomes more powerful.*

As to guns: The Terminator philosophy forbids such things. (It's possible that there are other rebel groups that can and would use guns.)

–SJ

NEXT ISSUE



Our February issue will include a history of the PBM game *Lords of Valetia*;

Some role-playing rules to put a little *Alien* in your life;

A featured review of *Cosmic Encounter* and all the expansion kits;

An improved mission resolution system for *Freedom in the Galaxy*;

A *Risk* variant based on Conan's Hyboria;

The winners of the weapons contest;

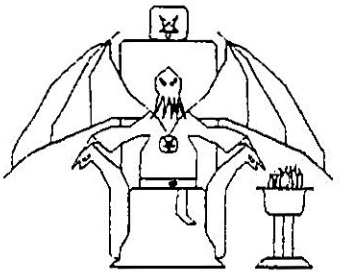
A company report from Fantasy Games Unlimited;

And an amplitude of capsule reviews.

COMPUTER GRAPHICS CONTEST RESULTS

There weren't too many entries in the Computer Graphics contest, but the ones we got were good. The winner was Scott Fleming. His shaded multiple-character picture of an X-wing is actually about three feet long. About it, he wrote, "The program . . . is written in PASCAL, and executes on the basis of every space (or in some cases an entire line) being assigned a particular density. All I had to do was assign (by hand) a density to each space."

Second place went to Joseph R. Power's demon. This is just a line-and-dot sketch, but very imaginative – a good use of the medium.



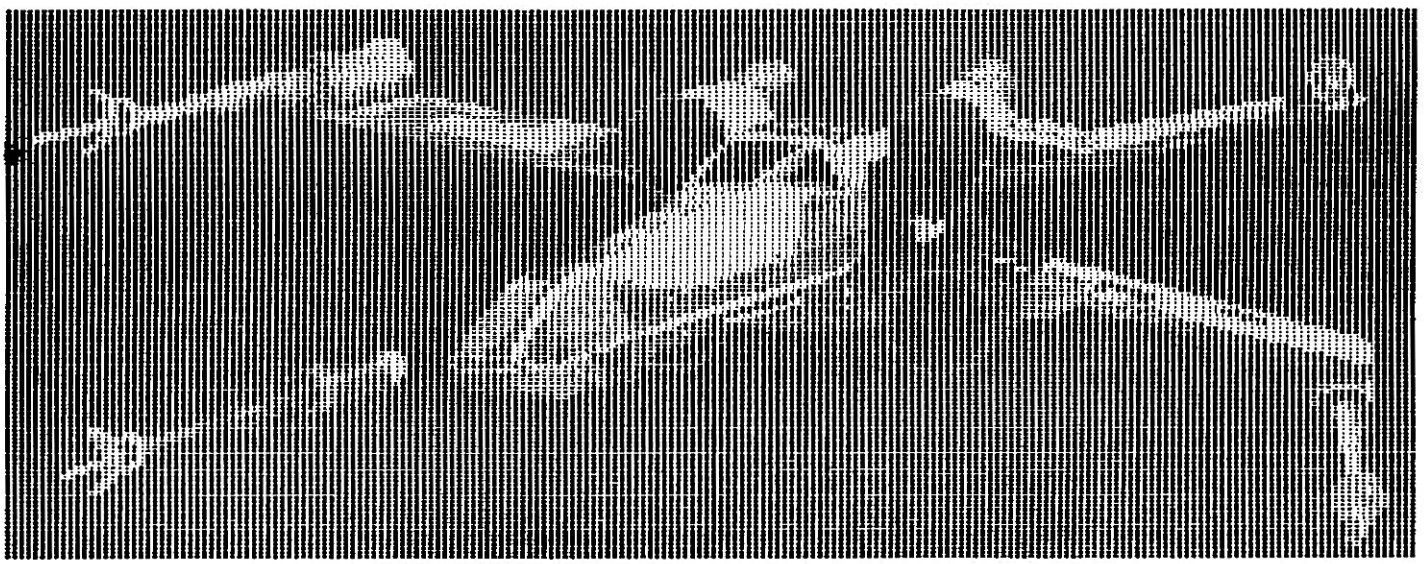
Demon by Joseph R Power

This month's contest is very simple. We're looking for magic. Send us your best new spell or magic item for FRP games. No more than three entries per person, please.

Entries will be judged on believability (whatever that is), cleverness, effect on game balance . . . and FUN in actual play. We will publish the winner, runner-up, and as many honorable mentions as fit.

(We're expecting a good response to this one. It's similar to the Weapons Contest in No. 34 – and that one has already drawn a lot of excellent responses.)

All entries become the property of TSG. First-place winner will receive a 12-issue subscription; runner up will get 6 issues. We reserve the right to award no prizes of no entries of publishable quality are received. Entries must be postmarked no later than February 28, 1981.



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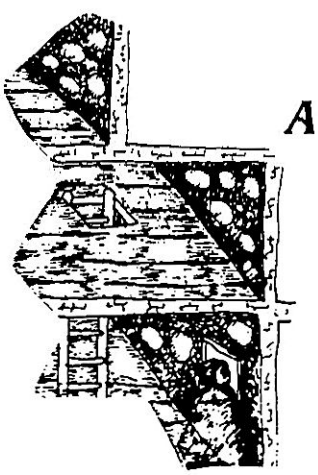

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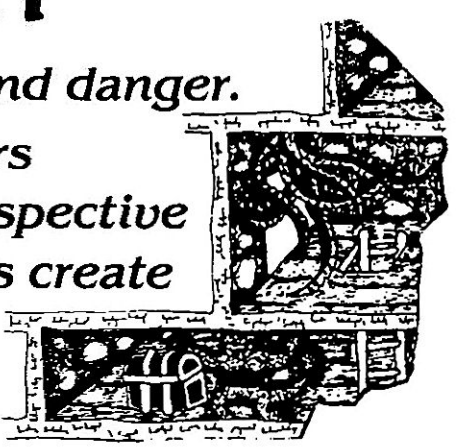

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Pawn of the FIRE WEB

by K. L. Jones

The blue-green fire seemed to be dancing mere centimeters from the lenses of the view screen. He knew that the force field was holding and that the fire was at least ten meters from the hull. The instruments told him that. The instruments also told him that the ship was caught fast in the power interplay created by the web and the ship's force field. The Rodgan cruiser which had cast the web was out there somewhere. As long as it held the web on his ship he was stuck.

He pressed his tongue against the first molar on the left side of his jaw, activating the psi-link with the ship's computer.

"Suggestions," he subvocalized.

"*Can you clarify?*" The response was instantaneous.

"I'm asking for suggestions as to how we can get out of this mess."

There was a pause this time. Then:

"*I'm a computer, not a magician.*"

"I continue to be surprised by your sarcasm," he snapped back. "I didn't know that was included in your programming. Just tell me what you would do if you were me."

Again there was a slight pause before the computer responded.

"*If I were you . . . I'd take a break . . . Try and relax . . . Our force field will hold indefinitely . . . Their web will last even longer . . . Nothing will be decided in the immediate time frame . . . And your bio-readouts indicate you need a break . . . As for the sarcasm, I'm self-taught.*"

He pressed his tongue against the left side of his mouth, cutting the link. Spinning in his command chair, he turned his back on the view screen and forcefully propelled himself from the chair. The gravity of the ship being somewhat less than he had expected, he almost toppled over before regaining his balance.

Momentarily he thought of activating the link to order coffee but before he did so he noticed the steaming cup sitting under the outlet in the mess area.

"Thanks," he spoke aloud, knowing that the computer's audio sensors would pick up the message.

Sitting with his back to the view screen he sipped at the coffee and tried in vain to block out the situation he was in. It was easy for him to feel at home here. The ship, the *Doubting Thomas*, was his home and had been for the last seven years. It had been a good home. It was everything he wanted.

After leaving the service where he had received his space flight training, all he had wanted was to run his own ferry service. Cargo or people. It hadn't mattered.

But then the war . . .

Who ever understands the reasons for

war? A conflict of interests. A dispute of minor significance elevated to a blood bath. None of it really mattered, except that he, Richard Winston Cramer, was a reserve officer.

When he was called up, he was given an option. Line duty on a fleet cruiser, or the messenger service. He chose the latter because he would be allowed to keep the *Doubting Thomas* and would avoid most of the hassles of regular military duty.

Then this mission. All he had to do was ferry some new weapon plans along with several working models to the Jadini System. The only catch was that the flight plan would require three jumps, two of which would bring him into areas patrolled by the Rodgans. The admiralty had informed him that the odds of completing the mission were heavily in his favor.

When the same data had been fed into the *Thomas*, he had gotten one word in response:

Sucker.

Cramer smiled bitterly at the memory as he sipped his coffee.

So here he was with his ship, twenty light years away from the nearest friendly forces, caught in the power web of a Rodgan cruiser.

The cargo he carried was, he had been told, significant enough to possibly make the difference in the war. Prudence would dictate surrender. But Cramer, had he been prudent, would never have desired the life of a space pilot.

He pressed his tongue against the molar.

"Give me all the available data on the Rodgan web."

First figures then facts began to fill his mind. He wasn't interested in theory and probably wouldn't understand too much of it anyway. What he wanted and what he quickly picked up was the actual working nature of the web.

It was the one real advantage that the Rodgans had. No one was sure how the field was generated, but it did take a lot of energy. The web itself had no power unless it was opposed by a force field. The interplay of the two fields created a time-space anomaly which resulted in a pseudo-gravitational web uniting the two ships. It was impossible to penetrate a Rodgan web with any known weapon.

"In short," Cramer spoke aloud again, "we're stuck here until they let us go. Or our force field collapses, at which point they turn off their web and hit us with their lasers."

"In sum, correct," said a speaker.

"Will our field outlast their web?"

"I have no access to their energy reserve monitor . . . however, since the cruiser is at least ten times our size, designed to engage in fleet battles and apparently has simply been on patrol, I would assume that they can keep the web on us until, if you'll pardon the expression, our reactors freeze up."

"Any suggestions on tactics?"

"Surrender. That is the only option that provides any acceptable chance of survival."

"How did you ever get so pessimistic?"

"Experience. If you want I will give you various tactics that have been employed by scout ships in similar situations. However, the tactics were all unsuccessful . . ."

"Never mind. What's the state of our armaments?"

"We have four missiles, none of which would be able to get through our force field. We have the laser, which is equally inoperable at this time . . ."

"If we deactivate the force field, can we use our laser against the Rodgans?"

"Yes . . . But we have no way of knowing where they are. By the time we target them, they will have scattered our particles . . ."

"You have such a knack for description."

Cramer moved from his position in the control chair. The green fire continued to dance in front of him on the view screen.

"If we turn our force field off, what happens to the web?"

"It collapses. Passes through us. Engulfs us. No one knows for sure . . . But the web itself cannot damage us . . ."

"OK. On the count of three, deactivate the force field, launch the missiles at maximum spread. Take evasive action for ten seconds, then resume former course and reactivate the force field."

Computers can't sigh, but Cramer thought that was the response his orders got.

He fastened the webbing which bound him to the chair. Stretched his arms out before him and then brought his hands down lightly on the control panel. There was no response to the pressure, and he knew that once the command was executed, the ship would, to the extent it was capable of movement, be fully automated. Still, he wanted the feel of those instruments at the tips of his fingers.

"One, two, three . . ."

The fire leaped at him, seeming to spring through the view screen. Even as the fire approached, the ride began. Gravity shifted, pulling him forward and to the right. Then back and still to the right. He was upside down for a second or two and then, just as he was righted, he was slammed into a brick wall.

The green fire was gone. It had left a residue, an after image seemingly burned into the backs of his eye lids, but it was gone. He shook his head, trying to clear the image.

The fire was back. It was no longer just a ghost image. It was there before him on the view screen.

"Report," he said.

"Missiles launched. Results uncertain. We were out of the web for . . . three minutes nineteen seconds."

"Did you get a fix on the Rodgans?"

"Yes . . . and no. I have no reliable knowledge of where they are now. We are, as I'm sure you know, back in the web."

"I know."

Cramer leaned back in the control chair. A damp trickle flowed into his mouth and he was surprised to find, when he ran his hand across his face, that it was blood. Even before he could speak, the computer responded.

"You have suffered a nosebleed . . . Several vessels in your proboscis have ruptured . . . If you will tilt your head backward, the bleeding should stop presently."

Cramer did so.

"Trapped," he said out loud. "And it had to be with a comic."

There was no response.

Time passes slowly when you are caught and held. Maybe time doesn't pass at all . . .

Cramer moved from the command chair and started pacing the small cubicle that served as bridge, mess area and cabin. He activated the link and asked for a readout on the tactics that had failed against the web. He spent some time, maybe minutes, maybe hours, reviewing the data. Then he asked:

"Which one of these should have worked?"

"*The one that seemed to have the best chance was the one involving random fluctuations of the force field.*"

A scout ship held in the web had tried to escape by randomly turning its force field on and off while firing at the Rodgan cruiser that held it. The scout had even managed to inflict two hits on the cruiser before it was blasted apart by the return fire.

"Why didn't it work?"

"*Three major reasons . . . One; the random pattern relied upon was the creation of the scout's computer . . . It was not*

completely random and was picked up by the enemy . . . Two; the scout tried to fight rather than run . . ."

"What's the third reason?" Cramer barked mentally when the computer failed to continue.

"*Lack of any real knowledge about how the web field works . . .*"

"Thanks a lot," Cramer said aloud.

Cramer began to pace the small area that was his home. More of a home than any place had ever been. It was a home he didn't want to give up, especially not to the Rodgans.

"We're going to do it," he said in a hoarse whisper.

"Do what?" the computer's audio speakers sounding very distant.

Cramer activated the link and fed the plan into the *Thomas* then asked: "Will it work?"

"*Probably . . . not.*"

"What's wrong with the plan?"

"*The basic lack of knowledge of the web makes any plan questionable.*"

"So it might work?"

"*It has as much chance as anything else . . . Except surrender . . . That would work.*"

"Give me the odds."

"*Ten out of a hundred . . . one out of ten . . . With a potential error of twenty to twenty-five percent.*"

"Sounds good enough for me."

"*You do realize that your plan is based on the assumption that the Rodgan wish to capture rather than destroy us?*"

"Yes," said Cramer. "If they just wanted to wipe us out they wouldn't bother playing with us."

"*Have you ever seen a cat with a mouse . . .*"

"Deactivate the force field," Cramer spoke the command.

He avoided the view screen for the seconds it took the green fire to collapse and pass through the ship. Nevertheless the image burned itself into his retinas. Even before the after-image faded he gave the sub-vocal command to switch to the ship's emergency energy system.

"Report," he barked, strapping himself in the command chair.

"The cruiser is ten kilometers off . . . at 190/30 degrees . . . It is advancing toward us . . ."

Cramer punched the buttons that gave him a view of the cruiser. It seemed smaller than he had expected. As he watched, a shuttle craft separated from the cruiser.

"They're coming out. That must mean they know what we're carrying."

"Either that or they don't think we're worth a laser beam . . ."

"When . . ." Cramer hadn't finished sub-vocalizing his thought when the computer cut in.

"*Thirty seconds to initial position.*"

Time passed. Seconds that seemed like hours.

Suddenly Cramer was pressed into his chair as the ship sprang to life, executing a hard turn at full acceleration.

Cramer pressed the button that sent the laser beam toward the approaching shuttle craft and was disappointed as it spattered harmlessly against the craft's armor.

The *Thomas* executed another turn; Cramer was pushed back into the chair as his ship reached full acceleration.

"*Jump point in nineteen seconds . . .*"

The ship's report was followed closely by a soundless explosion that shook the ship.

"*Minor damage in cargo section . . . Force field back on. Fluctuating at my command . . .*"

Cramer placed his fingers on the button that would allow him to override the computer's control of the force field. Only when his fingers pressed down would the field be activated. Its deactivation would be controlled by the computer.

He pressed, then released, then pressed. For a short moment the green fire danced before him only to be replaced by the greyness of hyperspace.

Cramer, feeling the tenseness drained from his muscles, laughed aloud.

"That was easy enough."

"It worked . . . But only because the Rodgans had some interest in not destroying us . . ."

"Do you think they know what we are carrying?"

"We are clothed in all the secrecy that Fleet Command could muster . . . Therefore, it is a given that the enemy knows more about what we are transporting than we do . . ."

"None of that matters," Cramer subvocalized. "We're the first craft to get away from the web."

"*It worked . . . Perhaps because we put a ship between us and the web generator . . .*"

"Well, it worked. The rest of this mission will be a piece of cake."

"*No . . . We will have to emerge from hyperspace in the Quartro Section . . . That area is generally patrolled by the Rodgans . . . And since they know what we are carrying . . . where we are going . . . They will be looking for us . . .*"

"No sweat. We beat 'em this time. We can do it again."

"*Yes . . .*" the *Thomas* responded. "*Maybe.*"

Despite his years in space, and the countless number of times he had experienced the translation from hyperspace to normal space, Cramer was always disappointed. There was no pop. No dramatic manifestations. The grey of the view screens was replaced by the gold-flecked black of the star field.

"Translation completed . . ." the *Thomas* reported. "We are . . . three thousand kilometers off course . . . Not bad."

Cramer scanned the instruments on the command console. All systems functioning.

"We're in good shape," Cramer spoke. "And no sign of the Rodgans."

"Wrong," the *Thomas* speaker sounded. "Full alert . . ."

The view screen in front of Cramer exploded into blue-green fire.

"Where are they?" Cramer said, activating the link.

"*Based on the data . . . received before the web hit us . . . they are . . . almost everywhere . . . There were seven cruisers . . . emerging from hyperspace . . . Roughly in a semi-circle to our rear . . . This time they really have us . . . by the tail.*"

Cramer looked at the view screen. Again he had the illusion of the fire dancing immediately before his eyes. It was, this time, an almost solid wall of flame. And this time the instruments were fluctuating. The force field was not holding the web ten meters from the hull. It was fluctuating between nine and seven meters.

"Status report."

"*We are caught . . .*"

Cramer waited.

"Go on," he said finally, venting his impatience.

"*Our status is . . . somewhat complicated . . . The web is much stronger . . . Data: current projection . . . capacitors will overload in . . . two standard hours . . . Other than that . . . everything's fine.*"

Despite himself, Cramer laughed.

"We're in great shape, huh. So what do we do?"

"*Three alternatives . . . We surrender now . . . We wait two hours . . . Or we drop our force field . . and using our laser . . . shoot it out with the Rodgans . . . We'd last about three seconds . . .*"

"Right," Cramer said.

"*Would you like more . . . coffee?*"

Cramer switched off the computer

link and moved to the mess area. Two hours. He might as well relax.

The coffee was bitter and there was no way to relax. He put down the cup and began to pace. "If we drop the screen, how long would it take to get a scan of what's out there?"

"Two seconds . . . Does it really matter . . ."

"No."

Cramer continued to pace. "I want to know ten minutes before the field gives out," he said.

There was no response.

The ship was quiet.

He sat down and reached for the coffee cup. It was halfway to his lips when the computer spoke:

"It appears my estimate was overly optimistic . . . by some five minutes . . . We now have a reserve . . . capable of maintaining the force field for seventeen minutes."

"Thanks," Cramer said.

He pressed his tongue against the molar, reactivating the link. He took a final sip of the coffee. As he put the cup down, he glanced at the view screen. The fire vanished.

"*The web is gone . . .*"

"I know. What happened?"

An explosion in the after section of the ship forced him into the table.

"*We are under more conventional attack . . . Twelve Rodgans . . . Others . . .*"

Another explosion and Cramer moved toward the command chair.

"Keep the field up."

"*Will not hold . . . Firepower too great . . .*"

"Damage report," Cramer demanded.

"*Port, starboard, and after cargo holds hit . . .*"

Another shock rocked the *Thomas.*

"*Forward, port, and all rear scanners damaged . . . Hull breached . . . Energy/fuel reserves . . . below critical . . . And I'm not doing too well myself . . .*"

The view screen went blank even before Cramer had strapped himself in the command chair. The instruments before him were a maze of red lights.

"*Craft approaching . . . Contact in two minutes . . .*"

"Prepare self destruct on my command."

"*No.*"

"What?"

"*We have no self-destruct capacity . . . It was removed prior to start of this mission . . .*"

"You're kidding."

"*Would I kid . . . about a thing like that . . .*"

Then: "*We will be boarded in . . . twenty seconds . . . Craft has breached port air-lock . . .*"

Cramer looked wildly around the cabin. The regulations required all fleet officers to have a hand blaster. But where in blazes was it?

"*Storage locker . . . under mess table.*"

Cramer moved to get the weapon.

"Thanks, Thomas."

"*Ten seconds . . . before they force the cabin hatch . . . three minutes of power left . . . Bye.*"

The blaster was in his hand as Cramer turned toward the hatchway.

"Bye, Thomas," he subvocalized. "It's been nice . . ."

He hesitated as the hatch opened. He hesitatated a millisecond longer at the sight of the first space-suited figure. He started to pull the trigger. He was too late.

He awoke with a splitting headache and in strangely familiar surroundings. His blurred vision cleared as the pain in his head settled into a dull throb.

An ensign, with fleet Command Staff ensignia on his collar stood at the foot of the bunk. Cramer pressed his tongue against the left side of his mouth.

"What's going on?"

No answer. Cramer felt himself encircled by nothingness. He was alone, cut off from the *Doubting Thomas.*

"What's going on?" This time he asked the question verbally.

"I'm not supposed to answer any questions," the ensign said. "No one is supposed to talk with you until after the debriefing."

"What about my ship?"

"The admiral wants to see you as soon as possible."

"You're a very lucky man, Cramer," Admiral Dearborn said.

The admiral sat behind a desk that seemed to be as large as the entire mess area of the *Doubting Thomas.* Cramer swayed slightly as he stood at attention. The pain in his head was gone but he was hoping for an invitation to sit down. It didn't come.

"Lucky that Fleet was able to pull your eggs out of the fire before the Rodgans hatched them."

Cramer forced himself to return the Admiral's smile.

"Sir, what about my ship . . ."

"Of course, on the other hand, you're not all that lucky. I mean if your mission had been a total success, you'd be a big

hero. We had plans to give you the Fleet Cluster. Posthumously, of course. Doesn't do to have too many live heroes running around."

"Yes, sir," Cramer said. "I'm sorry we weren't able to get to Jadini."

"You'd be even sorrier if you had managed to get through," the admiral said briskly. "You still don't understand, do you?"

The headache was beginning to return.

"You were bait. You were supposed to hold off that first Rodgan cruiser until the fleet arrived. We were going to capture it and get some first-hand knowledge about the web."

"What about my cargo?"

"Your cargo was a collection of junk. You were bait, but you got off the hook the first time. We followed you here and ran into half the Rodgan fleet. We lost two cruisers and sustained damage to three others. But, like I said, you're a lucky man."

"What about my ship?" Cramer said. "Sir."

"Oh, yes, the DT, or whatever you call it. It sustained heavy damage but was salvageable."

"I haven't been able to raise it on my link . . ."

"That's because this is a security area on a fleet staff ship and we are totally shielded."

"That's what he thinks . . . Sorry . . . Took me a while to figure out how to get through the jam."

The message was a little fuzzy but the static slowly dissolved.

"Now as I was saying, Cramer, you are a lucky man. You single-handedly messed up a fleet staff project. You cost us two ships and if you hadn't been so damn slow with your blaster, you would have wiped out three Fleet Staff NCOs sent to rescue you."

"You did everything right . . . in other words . . ."

"Never mind," Cramer mumbled.

"What was that?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Now I'm going to tell you why you're a lucky man. We have this courier mission . . ."

Cramer only half listened, knowing the details would be given at a more formal briefing, and would later be fed into the *Thomas*' data banks.

"You know what they did," Cramer subvocalized. "They used us like pawns. And we're getting the blame because the gambit didn't work."

"Not like pawns . . . There is always the chance . . . that a pawn can become a queen . . . We only had the chance of becoming so much . . . space junk."

"Are you listening to me, Cramer?"

"Yes, sir."

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Fire Web

Obviously, the technology used at the time of this story is a little higher than that found in *Traveller*. During the Third Imperium, fire web generators were known mostly through infrequent discoveries in ancient hulks. The generators varies widely in design, but the admittedly incomplete knowledge available at that time might be summarized thusly:

Code	Tech	Tons	EP
1	23?	1	3
2	17	50	10
3	17	100	20
4	18	75	20
5	17	200	30
6	18	150	30
7	23?	27	63
8	20?	196	92
9	19?	431	129

The discovered generators had that much in common – they had a measurable mass and consumed a measurable amount of energy. It was also possible to make a rough estimate of the technology level of the society which produced the generator. It goes without saying that discoveries of low-technology generators were more common (if that is the right word) than discoveries of high-technology generators. In fact, the numbers followed by question marks represent unique and perhaps unrelated artifacts discovered at separated points in a vast area of space over a period of hundreds of years.

Combat: A fire web can only be used at short range, at a single target which is using a continuous (nonflickering) black globe. The basic roll of 8+ is modified as follows:

+web factor (code)
–globe factor
–target agility rating
±relative computer size

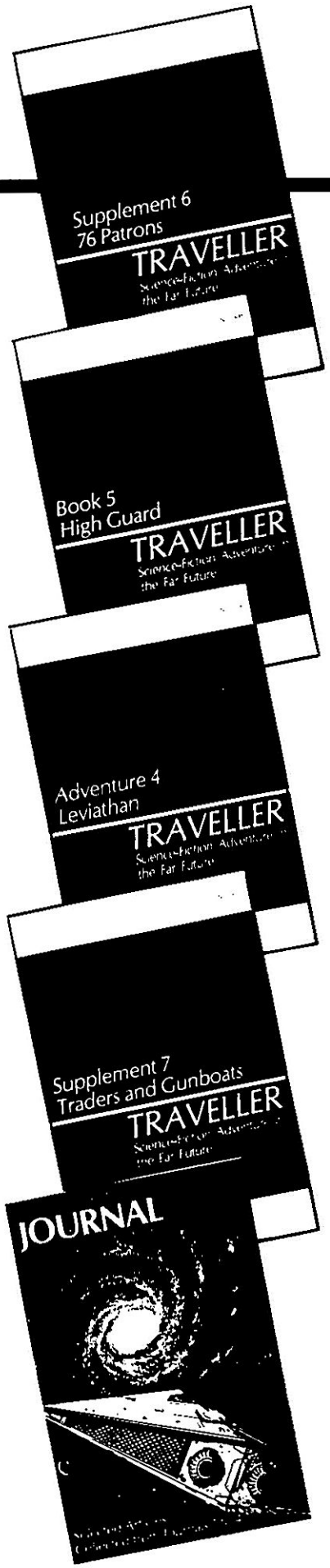
A successful hit will tie the ships together. Their vector will be the summed vectors of the two ships' motion. (Two ships of equal mass moving in opposite directions at equal speed would have a summed vector of zero.) If two (or more) ships web the same target, sum all three (or more) vectors. In practical terms, this means that the ships will remain at short range indefinitely.

A ship that makes a successful fire web attack can use its other weapons and its sensors freely, but not in the direction of the target ship. It can maneuver freely, if it takes the extra mass of the target ship (moving with it) into account, but it cannot use its jump drive. The target ship, of course, cannot fire, use sensors, or maneuver, unless it turns off the force field. It has the consolation of being invulnerable to attack from any direction, an advantage not shared by the attacking ship.

A sufficiently powerful fire web (or combination of the same) may overload the target ship's capacitors. This, by itself, will do no damage, but it will cause the force field to collapse, making the target vulnerable to other attacks. To calculate overload, subtract the defending screen factor from the sum of the attacking web factors. The result is the number of energy points absorbed per hour.

In the Campaign: Obviously, players will have little occasion to buy fire web generators, and less to install them on their ships. More often, the bad guys will play a fire web as a trump to players using a black globe. Also, a generator might appear in a scenario as a mysterious, but incredibly valuable, alien artifact that the players find, steal, or are hired to guard. (It should take quite a while for them to figure out what the gizmo does!)

Incidentally, a fire web appears on very few universal ship profiles. When it does appear, the code is appended with the letter W. For example, of W4 appears after a USP, that means the ship mounts a code four fire web generator.



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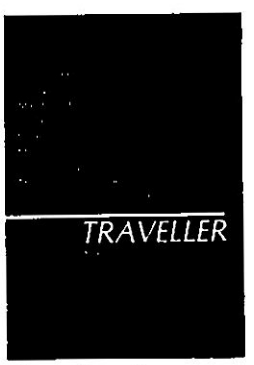

Game Designers' Workshop

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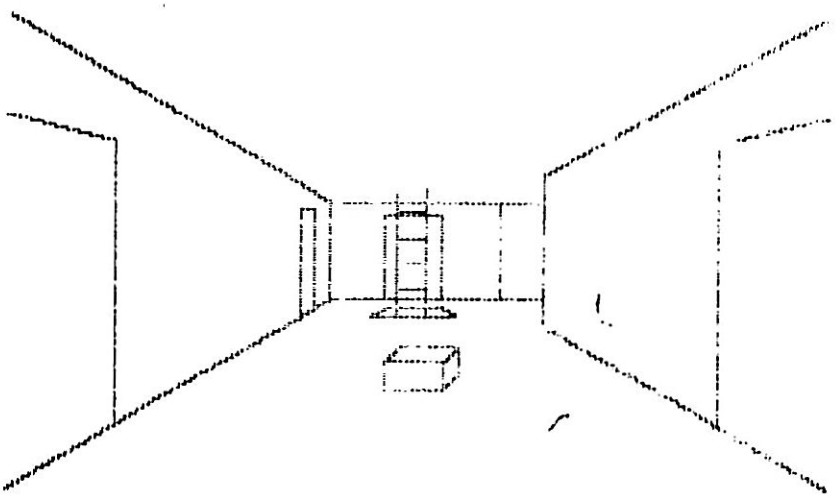
Featured Review:

AKALABETH



by Steve Jackson

"Aaahh, yes, son. It's as I've told you many times: There are fearful monsters in this land. Many have gone out to slay them, but few return, and fewer yet become knights. Knights? They're Lord British's men. Surely you've heard of British. He lives in a bloody great castle out there somewhere. If you want to be a knight, you have to go to him. He'll help you – he has magic to make you stronger and faster. But he'll send you underground, on fearful quests. For every one that comes back, ten starve to death in the wilds or go to fill some monster's gullet."

"So I've heard," the young man answered. "I'll still try my luck."

"Stout lad!" replied the gaffer. "Have you got your gear? Good! I think British will be pleased with you . . ." And it was a strange thing. When the young man turned back a second later, there was no sign of the old greybeard.

And so, shortly, it was through the village gates, and out into the countryside. Long days he travelled, past forests and mountains, villages and ruins that marked entrances to the underworld. These he avoided, but not from fear. He would kill monsters aplenty when the time came – but first he must find the fabled Lord British. He would go on a quest and earn the title of knight – or die trying.

AKALABETH is a fantasy adventure program for the Apple II. The player takes the part of a single hero – either a fighter or mage. He buys food and weapons and travels through the countryside, looking for trouble. Sound familiar?

In some ways, this game is trite – it's the old "slay the monster, grab the treasure" bit. But it's well-executed, and a lot of fun. If you happen to like slaying monsters and grabbing loot, you'll like this game.

You start by choosing a character. The computer will randomly generate characters for you. Some of the choices will be pretty sorry specimens; hold out for a good one. After supplying yourself with food and weapons, you head into the wilderness. Each day's move on the 20 x 20 map uses up one food unit. Should you run out of food, you will die – no matter what your strength or skill.

Among the features you'll see as you travel are the X-marks that indicate dungeons. Only in the dungeons is there danger. When you're ready for trouble, you can move onto one of the dungeon symbols and give the "enter" command.

Once you're in the dungeon, the view changes. You can choose to face any of the four directions. Whichever way you face, the halls are seen in good perspective, and each time you move the view changes. You see whatever is in front of you, be it blank wall, corridor, monsters, ladders, or trap doors. Each time you move forward, everything in front of you gets bigger – again in good perspective. The only confusing part about the perspective view involves the ladders. If you're in a space with a ladder, it will be shown in front of you whichever way you face. You quickly get used to the oddity – and it can be useful.

Although the view is clear, not everything is as it seems. Occasionally, a section of floor will turn out to be a hidden trap door. The only way to find such a section is to enter it. When you do, you will fall to the next level, taking minor injury in the process. There are also many concealed doors. The only way to find one is to "walk into a wall." If there's a door, you'll go through it and see a new scene on the other side. Otherwise, you won't move . . . you'll just see blank, solid wall in front of you.

AKALABETH uses a "seed number" system to generate its dungeons and outdoor maps. At the beginning of the game, the player types in a number. This number is then used to generate all maps. A given number will always generate the same maps – so you can return many times to an already-mapped area until you finally beat it, ir type in a new number each time for a wholly new game. (A couple of hints: 2 gives a nice map for beginners. 666 contains a death-trap.) This is really an excellent feature.

One feature of the "stocking" program will annoy some players: If you wander around (for instance) Level 1 of a dungeon for very long, you may kill all the monsters there and open all the chests. If you go down a level, stay one turn, and then come back up, all the monsters you killed before will be back on station, and all the chests will have magically reappeared – often with the same loot!

And, as time goes by, you'll pick up a lot of loot. There is no limit on encumbrance – another unrealistic aspect – which means that you may find yourself walking blithely through the dungeon with 1,256.9 food units, 17 swords, 12 axes, nine bows, and six magic amulets. (Unfortunately, though you may find extra weapons in treasure chests, you can't sell them at villages – or even drop them. You carry them around with you and hope a thief will steal them – that's about it.)

Monsters

There are ten different types of monsters in AKALABETH. The deeper you go, the more kinds you find and the nastier they get. A tenth-level skeleton is ten times as bad as a first-level skeleton. And the dungeon levels go on forever.

The "quest" assigned to players who enter Lord British's castle is simple. He'll tell you to go out and kill some specified monster. If you do so, and return alive, he'll send you after another one. And so on. Eventually, he will be satisfied – and you'll have won the game. It isn't easy, even at the first level of difficulty.

Seven of the ten monsters are very ordinary. They attack you physically, and that's it. There are three that are a bit different. The first is the thief. A thief may attack you – or he may steal something. He may grab food, magic amulets, or a weapon – even one you're using. Thieves are apparently magical; if you kill one, you'll find no trace of the thing he stole from you.

The second bad-news monster is the mimic. I won't tell you anything more; find out for yourself!

The third and worst of the special monsters in the gremlin. It may attack – but if it doesn't attack, it will steal some of your food. Since a character consumes one food unit each outdoor turn and 1/10 food unit each dungeon turn, and *starves* instantly when he is out of food . . . the gremlin can be deadly indeed.

Any monster may attack before you see it, if it is behind or beside you. This can be a problem: the computer tells you that you're being attacked by a balrog, but it doesn't say whether it's behind you, to your right, or to your left! If you're unlucky, you may have to turn three times in order to find your enemy – while he hits you each time.

Upon slaying any monster, an adventurer will receive a few gold pieces – the amount depends on the monster. This treasure can be used back in the village to replenish supplies.

The combat system is very simple: first you strike, then the monster(s) strike. You can attack at a distance if you have a bow or magic amulet, while a monster must be adjacent to harm you. However, you will sometimes be trapped between two (or more) monsters, both of whom may attack you each turn. And often you'll see a new monster appear behind the one you're fighting, waiting its turn to attack you. Monsters will pursue you (for a while) if you flee. If badly wounded, they will flee themselves, but if cornered they will turn and fight.

Damage simply reads out in terms of "hit points" – you always know how many hits you have remaining, and after hitting a monster a few times, you will be told how many hit ponts *it* has. These hit points lead to one of the system's least realistic aspects. Each time a character leaves a dungeon, he immediately receives more hit points based on the number and type of monsters he slew in the dungeon. This is great – but if your slaughtering expedition turns out well, you may find you have so many hit points that you're toughter (literally!) than twenty balrogs. Fortunately, the threat of starvation is ever-present (no matter HOW much food you carry, a gremlin is a deadly meanace) – so AKALABETH has no "invulnerable" characters. But a ceiling on hit points would have been a good idea.

Hints for Play

I'm not about to tell you how to win the game – part of the fun lies in figuring out the tricks to use. But a few hints won't hurt.

Mapping. If you intend to survive, map *at least* the outer world. Dungeon mapping is not a bad idea, but it's very time-consuming. A mage can probably dispense with dungeon mapping, due to his special abilities.

Fighters vs. mages. The mage definitely has the edge. His weapon attacks are almost as good as the fighter's. Furthermore, only a mage can control the magic amulet. In his hands, it's an all-purpose weapon and escape hatch. If a fighter tries to use it, it *may* work. Then again, it may backfire – and the fighter will hop out of the dungeon with a greenish tint to his complexion. I *don't* recommend that you play as a mage all the time. Start as a mage; then try being a fighter for more of a challenge.

Be patient. You'll lose a lot of characters before you get the hang of it. Then, suddenly, it'll seem easy. You're learning! Now try the next level of difficulty. This is a game of planning (and luck) – not reflexes.

On the whole, I recommend AKALABETH highly. The graphics are better than I've seen on any similar game; the program is varied and fairly logical. And it's fun.

AKALABETH (California Pacific Computer Co.); $34.95. Designed by "Lord British." Diskette for Apple II 48K with Applesoft; packaged in ziplock bag with instruction folder. One player; ten levels of difficulty. A game can last 3 or 4 hours if you live that long. Cannot be saved. Published 1980.

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Deus Ex Machina

THOU SHALT NOT . . .

(Part I)

by Bruce Webster

I recently received a book entitled *Writing Interactive Compilers and Interpreters* by P.J. Brown (Wiley, 1979). In it, Dr. Brown listed what he called the "thirteen deadly sins of compiler writing," consisting of mistakes commonly made in the design and coding of a compiler. Some of these were specific to compiler writing, but the majority of them were applicable to the design and coding of any piece of software intended for public consumption – including (and maybe especially) computer games.

Now I've had the chance to play many of the computer games out on the market, especially fantasy/science fiction simulations. As a professional software engineer, I've been very impressed by some and unimpressed by others. A few even manage to impress and disgust me at the same time. Since I know a lot of you out there are writing games on your micros, I thought I'd adapt Brown's list, adding a few of my own observations, and present to you the "ten deadly sins of computer game writing" in the hope that you may avoid them and save yourselves time and headaches.

Code Before You Think

This is perhaps the most widespread problem in software development in any field. It means you jump into writing actual program code before the design process has been completely worked through. The result is often a shapeless mass of code with no apparent structure, filled with patches and extensions. Such a program is difficult to debug or to even modify. This problem is compounded by the fact that most microcomputer game programming is done in Basic, a language that has little inherent structure in it, that has only global variables, and that (due to its lack of requirements upon the programmer) encourages "code-and-go" programming.

The solution is to define the program completely before writing a single line of code. There are a large number of books on the subject (two good ones are *Structured Systems Development* by Kenneth Orr and *Principles of Software Engineering and Design* by Zelkowitz, Shaw, and Gannon), but I will briefly summarize the steps here: (1) requirement analysis, or defining the requirements for an acceptable version of the game; (2) specification, or just how the game will work (i.e., input/output, files needed, program response, etc.); (3) design, or defining the specifications in terms of a program; (4) coding, or the actual writing of the program (from *Principles of Software Engineering and Design*, Zelkowitz, et al. pp. 2-7).

Assume the User Knows What You Know

This really is a deadly sin in program development. When you have worked with and sweated over a program for weeks or months, you know that program inside and out. Unfortunately, this often leads you to assume that things that are obvious to you about the program are readily apparent to others, which is seldom the case. This sin usually takes one (or both) of two forms. The first "sub-sin" is to fail to provide good user documentation. An example of this is Muse Software's *Three Mile Island* program. This is an excellent simulation of a nuclear power plant, but it is hard to dig the information you need out of the documentation. In fact, nowhere is there a complete diagram of the power plant – you have to piece that together by running the program and jumping from display to display. I understand that these errors are being corrected in a new release of the game, but it is found in too many other programs.

The second "sub-sin" is to fail to make the program user-friendly. The term user-friendly refers to software that helps to protect the user from his own mistakes and which supplies maximum information (within the constraints of the game) at any point. A positive example of this is Tom Cleaver's *Galactic Empires*. This program has good feedback during user input, good error trapping, and an excellent set of user "help" routines.

The cure for both these sins, as for many others, is testing by individuals not involved in the program development. Find people who know nothing about the game and who have various levels of computer expertise, and let them struggle with the documentation and the program itself. I promise you that they will find things you completely overlooked.

Omit Proper Documentation

This sin, vying with sin no. 1 for being the most common, is perhaps also the most understandable. It is *hard* to write and maintain good documentation during all phases of software development. It is also necessary if you want to turn out programs for other users that are reliable and easy to maintain. Three types of documentation are needed. First, there must be "in-line" documentation; i.e., comments within the program itself. These can be taken out in copies that are sold, but should always remain in an in-house "maintenance" version. Second, there must be written documents, separate from the program, containing information about the requirements, specifications, design and coding of the program. Finally, as mentioned above, there must be good user documentation.

The solution here is a combination of self-discipline (or external discipline from your supervisor, if any) and pre-defined documentation standards. You should sit down before doing anything and decide *how* you will document, *who* (if there are several people involved) will document, *when* it will be done, *what* will be in it, and *where* it will be located. It's hard to do, but if properly done, it will save you countless hours during debugging and modification.

Ignore the Strengths (and Weaknesses) of the Computer

Here I am not referring to "the computer" as a general device, but rather to the specific system or systems that your program will write upon. There is a definite trend toward multi-system software. This is very understandable; with the large number of systems on the market, one does not want to ignore a particular group of users. Unfortunately, some of the multi-system software is written by defining a "least common denominator" system and writing for that, ignoring the capabilities of each of the different systems. This has been a recurring complaint with Avalon Hill's new series of microcomputer games (such as *Planet Miners*).

There are a number of solutions to this problem. One is to pick a single system, or even a particular configuration of a particular system and to design all software accordingly. An extreme and yet excellent example is Edu-Ware Services, Inc. Almost all of their software is designed for a 48K Apple II with a disk drive and Applesoft Basic; the result is some very impressive software that makes full use of the Apple's capabilities. Another solution is to develop a basic game and then allow programmers familiar with a particular system to develop the version for that computer. This has been the approach taken by Automated Simulations in their *Dunjonquest* and *Orion* series.

Overestimate the Worth of your Program

There are many articles out today on how hardware costs are declining while software costs are rising, and it's true. Inflation is driving the cost of living up, and programmers (who have to eat, sleep, and wear clothes like everyone else, despite claims to the contrary) need higher salaries to get by. Unfortunately, the results are games that even I, as a programmer, think are overpriced. Does Automated Simulations' *Rescue at Rigel*, which I think is a very well-done game, at $30 really represent the same amount of expertise, testing, and investment as, say, SPI's *War in the Pacific*? If you really want to get nasty, compare the current crop of computer games to the various mini-games out, such as *Ogre*, and ask yourself if one computer game is really worth the equivalent of 10 such games.

This overpricing has one very bad side-effect: an epidemic of software theft. To make an unauthorized copy of a copyrighted computer program with the intent of avoiding buying a copy for yourself is breaking the law, no matter how you might justify it. As a software author, I have little sympathy for those who do it. Unfortunately, I think that the software houses are bringing it upon their own heads by the outrageous prices they charge. There are, of course, techniques for preventing copying, but many hobbyists look upon such barriers as a challenge – and at $30 a program, they have plenty of additional motivation.

There is no simple solution other than to charge less for the programs. As the cost of programs come down, the motivation to steal also drops. Indeed, I think that several companies would probably make more money by charging less, since they would sell more original copies.

Next month: Sins 6 through 10.

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No. 21. Interview with Dave Arneson; running a MicroGame tournament; tactics for Ogre and GEV; spaceship miniatures; Black Hole variant rules, putting the Deryni into Melee; more reviews.

No. 22. Ice War tactics; Black Hole physics; PARTY BRAWL; 1978 SF/fantasy game survey results; Fantasy Trip short story.

No. 23. Invasion of the Air Eaters designer's article; Ogre meets Ice War; Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.

No. 24. Black Hole designer's intro; "The Psychology of Wargaming"; Naval Melee; "The Four-Howitzer Defense in Ogre"; variants for Chitin: I, The Creature that Ate Sheboygan, and John Carter of Mars.

No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue . . . designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios. Also – strategy in Rivets; benefit-cost analysis for Ice War; "Everyday Life in The Fantasy Trip."

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Company Report: EON PRODUCTS

Eon Products is unique in that the company came from the general gaming market rather than from wargaming, role-playing, or miniatures. In 1972, Peter Olotka and Bill Eberle designed the original game which was to evolve into *Cosmic Encounter*. Shortly thereafter, Jack Kittredge and a fourth partner, Bill Norton, who has since left, joined the inventing group, and Future Pastimes was born – some say hatched. By 1976 Future Pastimes had built a relationship with all of the major game companies: Parker Brothers, Selchow & Righter, 3M, and others. One small slight-of-hand game called *One Two Three* was published in Germany by OMV. Future Pastimes designed about 20 unpublished games during this phase, and the effort seemed to pay off when, after years of negotiation, Parker Brothers and Future Pastimes signed a contract for the publication of *Encounter*. Six months later the contract was cancelled because "science fiction won't sell." Daunted but not squashed, Future Pastimes took the game in prototype form to the 1977 Boston science fiction convention. One of the science fiction fans, Ned Horn, offered to invest in the production of *Cosmic Encounter* and after several weeks of discussion, Eon Products was formed.

The People

Bill Eberle – Bill is from Concord, New Hampshire, where he spends his non-game time as a father of two children and a salesman for a chemical company. The Eberle contribution to game designing is a freewheeling thought process. He is easily the most artistic of the lot, though he could be considered an undeveloped talent. Bill likes to begin playing a game when it is still a twinkle in someone's eye, and has been known to sit down and play the design on the rug. He likes both social and strategic games.

Ned Horn – Ned hails from the catacombs of New York City where he makes a habit of getting mugged. It is rumored that he has made a fortune in bogus insurance claims, although none of us have been able to confirm this. Ned's creative talent is rooted in a love for all types of game-playing coupled with an ability to generate a wealth of ideas in short bursts of enthusiasm followed by brief naps. Ned is the only member of Eon Products who plays role-playing games and wargames.

Jack Kittredge – Jack is from Dorchester, Mass, and fills his free time helping to care for his three children, all under the age of three, working as an economic development person for a state wide social action agency and managing the business end of Eon Products. In his left-over hour, he sleeps. Logic is the key element to Jack's contribution. He has the ability to think out the relationships among the interacting forces in a game before the game is off the drawing board. Jack is blessed (cursed?) with exceptional perseverance and has been known to reverse the second law of thermodynamics and create order out of chaos. Jack excels at pure strategy games.

Peter Olotka – Peter lives in Cape Cod where he can be found basking in a new solar greenhouse, playing *Cosmic Encounter* with his two children, and sometimes his wife, and serving as director of the Cape & Islands Community Action Agency. His piece in the Eon designing pie is that of resident humorist, driving force, and all around creative thinker. Peter will always opt for a game that depends in the players' ability to survive through bluffing and guile. The more players are dependent on their wits, the more the fun.

The Process

Most of the designing is done in group sessions where it is impossible to attribute specific ideas to individual members. Since the designers all see things from their individually warped perspectives, the agreed-upon outcome is more often than not a case of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. Rules are passed around for editorial and style comment and rewrite, assignments are taken home for individual work, and occasionally two members will work on a particular problem in between design sessions. A large percentage of the group time is spent playtesting, where partisan advantage is the motivation for finding loopholes in the rules as well as creating new rules. "It would really be fun if I could only . . . ."

Many of the players of Eon games come from outside the wargaming market. Yet the hard-core gamers continue to find a fascination with Eon games. Eon designs games that appear to cross the lines drawn between wargamers, role-players, boardgamers, and even non-gamers.

The Game Line

Cosmic Encounter, the science fiction game for everyone, comes very close to filling that bill. The premise is simple. Create a new set of rules which are short and easy to understand. Then introduce as many ways to break those rules as possible in order to give the rule breaker an advantage. *Cosmic Encounter* was designed with several basic givens: (1) that players would not be eliminated from play; (2) that each player would be different; (3) that no dice would be used; (4) that players would do other than attack each other during play. Readers should keep in mind that the game was designed in 1972, before some of today's games were featuring similar axioms. The simple goal of having your alien establish 5 bases on your opponents' home planets seems almost too easy to the hardened veteran.

The way to those bases is always by a different route, which creates a new game with each playing.

Darkover is a game of psychic conflict. Eon has a saying: "Only the daring play *Darkover.*" Designing this game was without a doubt the most trying experience of our career. A good 20 false starts were bidding to be THE GAME, before the real item emerged on the heels of an intensive brainstorming session at Eberle's in Concord. The difficulty was in capturing the sense of 11 unrelated novels about a world where telepaths matched minds and weapons as their clans struggled to control not only the territory around them but the fierce psychic forces that raged within their race. *Darkover* wrenches the gamer away from his safe world of dice and charts and leaves his psyche exposed to the ravages of eye-stare combat, ghost wind-induced lunacy and the unforgiving emotion monitor who keeps a lookout for anger, greed, or despair – all harmful emotions to have floating around in a telepathic society. When Eon purchased the rights to *Darkover,* the Future Pastimes component was just coming off a successful experience designing *Dune* for Avalon Hill. *Darkover* proved to be much more of a challenge than anticipated.

QUiRKS is a game of unnatural selection. This new release was first designed in 1974 as *Evolution*, then *Adaptation*, and now finally published as *Quirks.* It breaks new ground. There is no game to compare it to. Simply put, *Quirks* is a game in which players compete against a changing climate and other players to create the best plants and animals. If a player causes the extinction of 3 Quirks, he is out of the game. If he captures all 3 niches, he wins the game. *Quirks* is humorous and features a solitaire version and a special set of rules for kids 7 to 11, called *Quirklings* (perhaps another first in our market).

The Future

Eon Products will concentrate on producing at least one major game a year and at least one smaller item annually as well. At some point Eon will probably introduce some non-science fiction games, perhaps even some general market items. There are a number of items in the pot brewing around, but none has as yet sprung out and tried to make the leap to stardom. With some hard work Eon could double its sales volume in 1981, expanding into some of the as yet untapped markets which await the creative game marketer.

Peter Olotka

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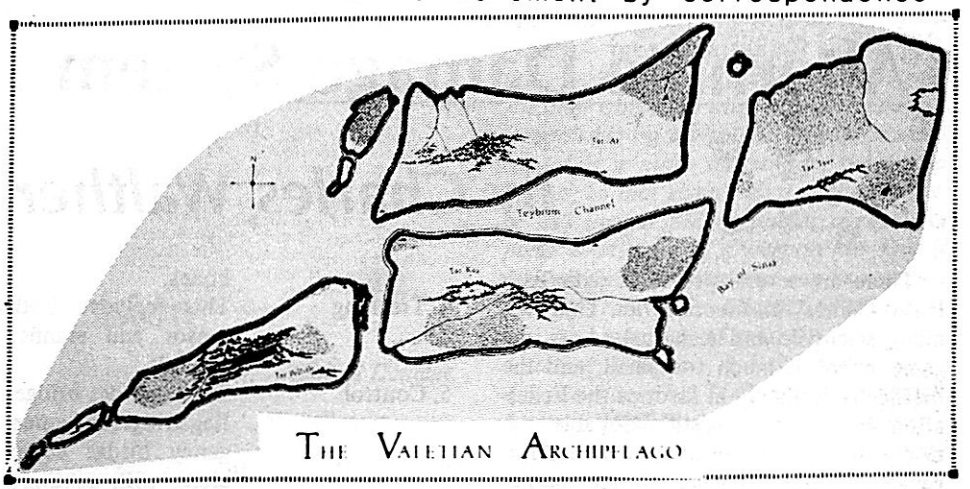

The Valetian Archipelago

...with a hissing shriek a second Rask leaped from the outcropping, swinging a short battleaxe. Telegar snapped his shield up to catch the blow but the force knocked him flat on his back a second time. As his shoulders hit he pushed up and over his head with the shield, flinging the Rask away before it could free it's axe for another try. Scrambling to his feet, Telegar faced the Rask who'd already recovered its footing. It brandished its axe warily. Telegar advanced a step and feinted with his sabre tip.

...as he pierced the Rask through, the axe missed his helm and smashed into the Dwarf's shoulder. The mail shirt withstood the edge, but the shoulder was broken.

Before Telegar could roll the Rask over to recover his sabre, the first Rask had recovered its breath and its feet...

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Lords of Valetia is an adult game open to anyone 18 years of age or older living within the continental U.S. Residents of Alaska, Hawaii, Canada, or having APO/FPO addresses will only be accepted on provision that the customer realize there may be excessive postal delays to those areas at times. All funds must be paid in U.S. currency.

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Tell us you saw it in The Space Gamer.

STAR FLEET BATTLES

Alternate Damage System

by Charles Walther

There are several problems with Task Force Games' *StarFleet Battles.* There are many scientific and technical errors, the game board is much too small, and the balance is decidedly in favor of the Federation. But the game is still enjoyable and, in my opinion, is one of the best tactical games of space warfare on the market today. What I and other players of the game have found to be the biggest obstacle to game enjoyment is the long and laborious task of computing ship damage in battles.

In a one-on-one game, or with just a few ships, the system given in the rules is tolerable. However, the system breaks down when there are multiple players on each side. In some cases, computing a ship's damage from a massive volley of fire requires fifteen minutes of rolling dice. After several of these volley hits, the interest in the game quickly falls to zero. If your opponent is stupid enough to park his Federation Destroyer next to your Klingon Dreadnought, the process of computing ship damage can take all day.

The obvious solution is to formulate some sort of rapid damage computation chart that will allow a smooth game and yet not cause it to lose its basic logic as presented in the rules.

From experience I have found that you can simplify all possible areas of damage into seven separate categories. They are as follows:

1. Hull	This includes both forward and aft hull boxes along with cargo boxes.
2. Energy	This includes warp and impulse power boxes and APR and battery boxes.
3. Weapons	This includes all phaser boxes along with plasma and photon torpedoes and disruptor and drone boxes.
4. Tracking	This includes both sensor and scanner boxes.
5. Control	This includes bridge, flag bridge, and emergency bridge boxes along with auxiliary control boxes.
6. Damage	This includes both damage control and excess damage boxes.
7. Miscellaneous	This includes anything not mentioned above, i.e., lab, shuttle, tractor, transporters, etc.

Looking in column A of the Damage Allocation Table, we can calculate the following:

Hull hit	probability = 44.45%
Weapons hit	probability = 27.78%
Energy hit	probability = 22.22%
Control hit	probability = 5.56%

Computing volleys in tens of hits to simplify matters we can now see that the first ten hits of internal damage will be as follows:

Hull	4 hits
Weapons	3 hits
Energy	2 hits
Control	1 hit

A volley of less than ten hits would be taken by going from the most probable source of damage to the least probable source of damage. For example, a volley of eight hits would be taken as four hull hits, three weapons hits, and one energy hit. The player of the ship taking the damage would then have the option of eliminating as many boxes as indicated from his sheet in accordance with the rules given in the damage section of the rule book. (He could not, for example, take damage on forward-mounted weapons when attacked from the rear.)

A heavier volley of hits could be computed in a similar manner with one major difference. Many items on the damage chart can only be hit once per volley. This would cause some of the numbers rolled to be read on column B instead of on column A. A volley of 20 hits would be figured by taking the first ten hits on column A and the next ten hits on column B for all those numbers underlined and in bold print on column A. Allowing for this shift of columns, hits eleven through 20 would be read off as follows:

Hull	66.67%	7 hits
Miscellaneous	16.67%	2 hits
Weapons	11.11%	1 hit
Control	5.56%	0 hits

The control hit was left out in this case since it has the lowest probability. A volley of between eleven and twenty hits would be computed by reading off the first ten hits as already given and then taking the remainder going again from the most probable to the least probable.

For a volley of up to thirty hits, another shift of the column would have to be taken into consideration. Assuming the hull boxes were not yet exhausted, the twenty-first through the thirtieth would be taken as follows:

Hull	66.67%	7 hits
Energy	27.78%	3 hits
Tracking	5.56%	0 hits

Beyond this point, the computation of damage becomes less mathematical and more subjective due to the fact that by now some categories of damage may have been exhausted. In order not to come up with a mathematically correct but realistically unplayable chart, I have used my previous knowledge of the game to come up with a damage chart that will allow the rapid assessment of damage up to a volley of sixty hits. After this point, if there was still more damage to compute, I would start over again at the beginning.

There remains one final item to be considered. Suppose a given category becomes exhausted; how then would you compute damage? The answer to this is based again on my past playing experience with this game and what I would consider to be the most realistic approach. At the bottom of the table is a damage progression chart showing how damage in one category would relate to damage in another category. In this case, simply take the number of hits in an exhausted category and read off the damage in the other categories. I have used fractions of not less than ¼ or 25% to make matters simple for the player.

Looking over my new damage chart, some might think this is a case where the treatment is worse than the disease. I can only ask you to try this new damage chart a few times before you go back to rolling dice again, Once you get used to it, the chart becomes easy to use.

Alternate Damage Chart

Damage Category	*Number of Hits in a Volley*					
	1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Hull	4	7	7	3	2	0
Energy	2	0	3	7	1	2
Weapons	3	1	0	0	0	1
Tracking	0	0	0	0	3	2
Control	1	0	0	0	0	1
Damage	0	0	0	0	0	1
Miscellaneous	0	2	0	0	4	3

Damage Progression

Exhausted Category		*Related Damage*
Hull hits	go to	Miscellaneous hits
Miscellaneous hits	go to	50% Energy, 25% Tracking, 25% Weapons
Energy hits	go to	50% Weapons, 25% Tracking, 25% Control
Weapons hits	go to	50% Tracking, 50% Control
Tracking hits	go to	50% Control, 50% Damage
Control hits	go to	Damage hits

EDITOR'S NOTE: Some players may object to arbitrarily taking one control hit for every initial 10 hits in a volley, since the probability is less than one in ten. As an optional rule, you can solve the problem by rolling one die whenever the probability of hitting a certain weapon system is only 5.56%. On a roll of 1-3, the system is hit; on 4-6, the system is missed – take the hit in the system with the next lowest probability instead. Another objection might be that taking a weapon hit on a photon torpedo or a disruptor is a more serious loss than on a phaser, so that given a choice, the defender will usually pick a phaser over a torpedo when scoring a weapon hit. This is also a valid objection, and can be resolved by a die roll. If the number of torpedoes and the number of phasers carried are equal or nearly so, 1-3 is a torpedo hit, 4-6 is a phaser hit. If there are significantly more phasers than torpedoes, 1-2 is a torpedo hit, 3-6 a phaser hit. If drones are carried as well, adjust the roll to reflect the ratio of drones to torpedoes and phasers, so that 1 might be a torpedo hit, 2 a drone hit, 3-6 a phaser hit, etc. If the only weapons left are phasers, of if only a torpedo can be hit from the direction of incoming fire, no roll will be necessary.
–WB

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GAME DESIGN:

Theory and Practice

Part X: Combat Systems

by Schuessler and Jackson

The major building blocks of combat systems are the sequence of play, combat strengths, and combat results table. In fact, these items could constitute a combat system by themselves. The sequence of play tells you when you're going to fight, and the combat strengths and CRT provide the resolution. However, if the combat system ended with these features, the result would be a mechanical and sterile game. Qualitative differences would be nearly impossible to depict; they would generally be limited to tinkering with the combat strengths. The whole thing would begin to take on a chess-like quality. (Indeed, some have attempted to re-do chess in a hex format with the standard wargaming attributes.)

Here, we use the term "combat system" to include not only the basic elements mentioned, but also the special rules and exceptions that add variety. When we speak of "chrome," "feel," or "flavor" in game design, we're usually referring to the attributes that meld the basics together and make the whole thing unique – a special design with a distinct personality and style. For example, both *PanzerBlitz* and *Streets of Stalingrad* deal with platoon-level combat on the Russian front. But the differences in the combat systems put them far apart.

Terrain Effects

These are the most common addition to the basic combat system. Terrain effects have been steadily developing in sophistication – a long way from the days when nearly any terrain doubled the defender's combat strength. Most of the terrain effects are analogous to the terrain effects on movement (see TSG 31). Nearly anything in the way of foliage, weather, elevation, water barriers, and built-up areas will make things harder on the attacker – just as they make movement more difficult.

Armor and cavalry are handicapped much more than infantry in forests and cities. They get dispersed among the trees and buildings; their field of fire is greatly restricted; they become quite vulnerable. Towed guns are much more susceptible to changes in weather than armor or infantry. Water barriers are the most common terrain features in wargaming. It has been an article of faith that rivers double the defender's combat strength. However, a closer look shows that the term "river" includes quite a range of water barriers. Some rivers flow swiftly, making bridging and fording more difficult. Some have cliffs which may actually benefit an attacker. In strategic level play, we have instances where a retreating defender can cross the river without penalty; a disorganized mass of defeated troops calmly marches over the few available bridges in perfect order. But on the next turn, the attacker is faced with a "defender doubled" crossing the same river.

Elevations have much the same problem. At the strategic level, hills or mountains clearly benefit the defender. But at the platoon level, being on top of a hill only helps sighting *on a clear day.* Sitting on a perch doesn't add a lot to your defensive value. And, since it's more difficult to depress heavy guns than to elevate them, the ability to return fire might actually be hampered.

So there is terrain and then there is terrain. Normally, the effects on combat are simplified because of sloth or playability. But the designer should at least be aware that he is making simplifications, and not escape into the rut simply because the last 50 games he's looked at use "defender doubled."

Waiting for Godot

Beyond terrain effects, what is included in a design depends on what kind of "statement" the designer is trying to make. The most common kinds of "chrome" present the gamer with problems similar to the historical commander. These include deployment, command control, logistics, and leadership and morale.

At times, the "chrome" gets mixed up in the controversy over "game" vs. "simulation." Somehow the lack of chrome throws a design into the "game" category while reams and reams of unintelligble rules qualify the thing as a "simulation." In many ways, this dichotomy tends to obscure the underlying question. It does a real disservice to the gamers.

Chrome isn't there to lengthen the rules. At its best, it is organic to the design. Rules for command control, for example, shouldn't occur just because the designer has an affinity for the chain of command concept. They should be included when command control had some substantial impact on the outcome of a campaign. Too often, an inept design in explained away as a game/simulation (choose one), as if that justified the gobble-gobble in the background. There are good and bad designs; to talk about a good game but a bad simulation seems to smack of prevarication.

Hex Technology and Zones of Control

One interesting question is what actually happens in those adjacent hexes when combat occurs. We have a convention that, at the operational and strategic levels, gives us stacks of counters in adjoining hexes as a precondition for combat. Also, these stacks exert their influence into adjoining hexes, exercising a "zone of control" (ZOC).

If every unit in the hex can engage in combat, then the designer assumes that there is sufficient frontage for the counters to deploy on line (as shown in fig. 1), or that the turns are long enough to allow for the rear formations to become engaged (see fig. 2). On the other hand, if

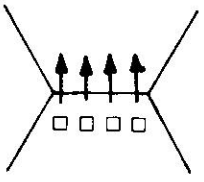

Figure 1

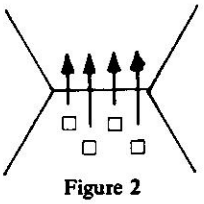

Figure 2

the designer restricts the number of counters used in an attack then the configuration would be closer to figs. 3 and 4.

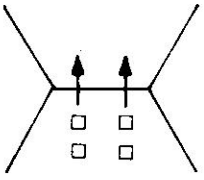

Figure 3

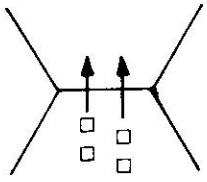

Figure 4

Now, to complicate this whole mess a bit further, we can add in the idea of deployment discussed in TSG 32. A line formation is ideal for travelling, but awkward for combat. It will use less frontage – more units will be available for attack, albeit piecemeal. If these same units redeploy to a line formation, they will tend to crowd against each other.

The effects of deployment tend to lessen at the strategic level. Because the counters represent large formations, we simply assume that combat represents proper deployment on an adequate frontage. At the operational level, however, deployment and frontages become real concerns that must be depicted or "factored out" by the designer. Curiously, the issue almost disappears again at the tactical level when the emphasis turns to weapons and the mechanics dictate the deployment.

Equally complex is the question of what exactly a ZOC represents in terms of combat. In the older AH games, for example, being in an enemy ZOC forced combat; you had to attack. This trend has continued in SPI's *Panzergruppe Guderian* system, with certain modifications. In other cases, an enemy ZOC only hampered movement.

What seems to have been overlooked is the fact that the ZOC is a function of what is in the hex. That is, a stack of four infantry divisions in a *War in Europe* hex would probably "exert an influence" into adjacent hexes. A single infantry division would be covering something like double its rated frontage just in its own hex. The idea that this overstretched unit could "exert an influence" into adjacent hexes taxes even a willing suspension of disbelief.

Still, the ZOC and forced combat are great simplifiers.

Command/Control

In the olden days, counters were bits of change to be combined and recombined at will. Historical designations were sometimes provided as a sop to hardcore players; they served mostly to prove that the designer had done some historical research and to decorate the cardboard.

Some sharp-eyed players began to complain that if, "in real life," you mixed the 3rd battalion of the 5th regiment with the 2nd battalion of the 64th regiment, bad things would happen. Commanders would be confused; the units would work badly together. So command/control was born.

The basic premise of command/control is that there was some reason why the units were organized the way they were. When you tamper with that organization, you risk lessening the effectiveness of the units. Most of the command/control strictures are built around unit integrity and distance from headquarters. Mixing units from different formations or moving them too far from their headquarters results in some penalty.

Command/control presents a number of opportunities and problems to the designer. To begin with, it is an excellent technique for play balance – a way to hamper a strong force that performed poorly. Layers of C/C rules can be carefully added and easily justified in the name of "tactical doctrine" or the like. On the debit side, C/C requires a lot of boring research. And care must be exercised that C/C does not become unnecessarily restrictive. For example, if the history shows that *ad hoc* formations were frequently used, forcing the gamer to adhere to "the book" would hurt both credibility and the feel of the game.

Further, C/C rules are tedious, cumbersome, and tend to interfere with the pace of play. Like other bits of chrome, they should be used sparingly and only because the design would be incomplete without them – not hung on as baggage to demonstrate the designer's knowledge.

Marechal des Logis

Supply is another bit of "chrome" available to the game designer. Naturally, lack of supply inhibits combat. However, the use of logistics in wargaming has been both misunderstood and abused.

In some games, supply rules are so stringent that the forces can't even do what was done historically. Other games have the players spend the bulk of their time "counting biscuits," sometimes when supply had only a marginal effect on the campaign. Some games treat "out of supply" in an abstract manner – ignoring the fact that, until engaged, a unit still has its basic load regardless of its distance from a theoretical "source of supply."

When we get down to the worm's level, the whole question multiplies in complexity. For example, there is a rated "basic load" for units. But the numbers in "the book" don't take into account the way veterans tend to accumulate a little extra. When this extra is multiplied across ten or twenty thousand troops, the unit's ability to sustain combat – even when technically "out of supply" increases dramatically.

In modern combat, shells for the large calibre guns account for 60-70% of the division's tonnage. Thus, being "out of supply" would primarily affect artillery and tanks. Some historical examples of units which would be considered "out of supply" give surprising results. The Sixth Army, encircled at Stalingrad, survived for about three months (12 turns by *War in Europe* standards). The paratroopers of the British 1st Airborne Division held the bridge at Arnhem unsupplied for more than a week – fighting off an SS panzer division.

Our rule of thumb for designers is simple-minded but effective. Supply effects should never be more severe in the game than they were in the actual battle. If the armor spearhead was still making garbage out of the enemy 300 miles in front of the railhead, they obviously found the means to make do. If Frodo managed to get the Ring into the pit, then his lack of food, water, and sleep was not a crucial factor.

Win One for the Gipper

Leadership and morale sort of "arrived" with Avalon Hill's *Squad Leader*. Designer John Hill decided to quantify morale and plug it into the combat sys-

tem. The result no doubt suggested the headline, "The Chrome-Plated Machine Pistol" over Richard Berg's review in in *Moves.*

This area is nebulous. In professional military circles, no one is really sure just what morale and leadership are, or how they affect combat. For example, the Russians in World War II solved the "morale" issue by stationing NKVD behind the front lines to shoot the folks who decided that the socialist utopia of the USSR was slightly flawed. The mid-level leadership of the US army in WWII was decidedly inferior to that of the Germans, but we won.

I would argue that at AH's sub-tactical level, and even at the tactical level, some morale and leadership rules should be mandatory. One of *PanzerBlitz*'s real weaknesses is the absence of such rules. However, beyond that level, the unit sizes lead to a kind of standardization, where the leadership and morale gets "factored in" and is properly represented by things like combat strength, command/control, and supply rules.

The Envelope, Please

Picking the chrome for a wargame is the easy part. The work comes when you try to figure out just what in the world these things mean to the combat system.

Given the standard system, calculating the penalties or bonuses is pretty much restricted to three modes: altering the combat strength, altering the column on the CRT, and altering the die roll. As a practical matter, we might note that these options are sort of hierarchial. That is, doubling a combat strength is much more a reward than adding one to the die. Thus, the clever designer can save a lot of time by ranking the chrome, based on the research. If we discover that in the actual campaign, mixing units was every bit as bad as attacking into a mountain range (although I would doubt it), then the effects would be identical.

If the game uses a step- or strength point-reduction system, then the designer has other options available. For example, a unit might be permitted to attack at full strength out of supply, but suffer a step reduction after the attack, to show the costs of such an effort.

What makes all of this business come together into a unified combat system is a flexible designer and hours of playtesting. In some cases, we can see where the designer came to the game with certain preconceptions about the chrome, and persisted well after the pre- had turned to mis-. Not all chrome works; even some historically valid chrome can be misplaced in a design. The chrome is there to hold together the basic elements of the combat system: the play sequence, the combat strengths, and the CRT. It has no rights beyond that.

Special rules require playtesting, and the most maddening aspect of contemporary wargaming is finding the game that hasn't been playtested. Clearly production schedules have their place. But an untested game is not a game at all – simply someone's musings reduced to paper.

Of all the elements in a wargame, the combat system requires the greatest amount of playtesting. As a minimum, we would expect that the designer had shoved around the cardboard until he was satisfied. And we would also hope that at least some blind playtesting had occured. Blind playtesting is nearly the only way to unsnarl the rules. After all, the designer knows perfectly well what the rules mean; he wrote them. Dumping the rules on an unsuspecting playtester will immediately show how carefully thought out they are. Finally, blind playtest is the one thing in a wargame that can't be faked. Its presence or absence is all too apparent, nearly as fast as you open the box or bag.

Next: Research

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Playing Paragon

by Aaron Allston

When, very early in my D&D career, I rolled up my first paladin (an affable chap named Astolph who has an intense dislike of undead), I barraged the DM with questions about the character's requisite behavior: Can he sympathize with an evil foe? Call for help when his life is threatened? Weep? Destroy an inhuman foe who is surrendering? Make love? Marry? Sire children? Crack jokes? Make awful puns?

The collective answer was NO. The reason was BECAUSE HE'S ABSOLUTE LAWFUL GOOD. The DM was fourteen. His only idea of paladin-type behavior seemed to come from watching Launcelot in the musical version of *Camelot*. His supposition that each of the listed activities was inherently evil was frustrating in the extreme.

Most of his answers fall before logical reasoning. A paragon-figure, besides going out, destroying evil, gathering loot, and giving most of it away, is trying to act as a role-model, a racial/national hero-figure to whom the young and weak may look for advice or aid.

The society of the paragon's people, his protectorate, will influence his behavior to a great extent. A paladin from an England-like kingdom will not act identically to a paladin from a Japan-like land; chivalry is not the same thing as bushido.

A paragon born in Rohan already has certain of his behavior modes laid out before him. He'll be a Rider of Rohan. As a role-model, he'll try to become a superb horseman. On the other end of the spectrum, an Earthsea paladin may not even know which end of a horse is which. He'll become the best seaman he can.

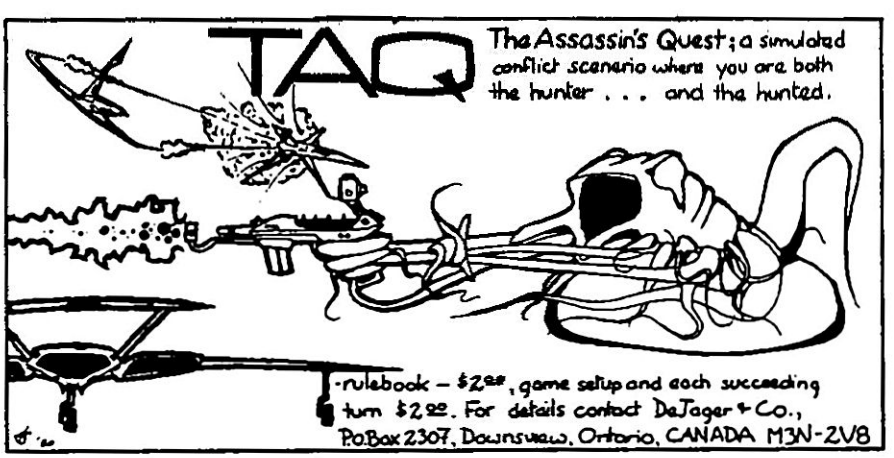
Some DMs allow non-human paladins. Obviously, an elf-paragon will not function as does a dwarf-paragon, and neither's behavior could be confused with that of (yech) a half-orc-paragon. (The concept of a prootwaddle paragon is so chilling that I will not deal with it.) The elf will fight for woods and streams, for love of things green and growing. The dwarf will defend deep tunnels and caves of dwarfkind; he will be moved much by the beauty of gold, though he will not accumulate much. The half-orc will fight to express his dislike of the other character races, and the world at large.

There are certain weapons appropriate to a paragon. A human paragon will automatically opt for sword and shield, unless his culture emphasizes some other weapon. The elf-paragon will master sword, spear, and bow. The dwarf-paragon will choose first the axe and hammer. The orc-paragon will probably pick up the nastiest thing available, then drag it in a swamp to poison the edges.

A paragon will develop his abilities to benefit his people. Expressed in TFT terms, almost any paragon may have Literacy, Courtly Graces, Charisma, Diplomacy, New Followers, Tactics, and Physicker. A human will also have Sword and Shield at the very least; an elf, Sword, Spear, Bow, and Woodsman; a dwarf, Axe/Mace, Thrown Weapons, Engineer, and Mechanician. An orc might have Whip or Monster Followers.

If the paragon's society does not disallow it, bedding a consenting partner will do neither harm. A paragon can obviously feel sorrow for his opponent (as he cuts him down); a paladin can interpret "mercy" to a surrendering vampire as the release of its soul from its soon-to-be trashed mortal form. A paragon born to a witty Renaissance-type society may be an unstoppable punster and will probably opt for rapier and main-gauche in lieu of broadsword and shield.

Regard Arthur Pendragon, legendary King of Britian. Was he not a paragon? He carried forth the noblest ideals to his people, and fought for them with all the abilities and forces at his command. He was surely a paladin. Yet he suffered much in spite of all his goodness, was betrayed, and died unhappy. Though a paragon, he was still a feeling, mortal man, not the typical boring personification of good.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Capsule Reviews

Games for which reviews have been assigned or received include: *The Astrogators Chart Book, The C&S Sourcebook, Cardboard Heroes, Citadel of Blood, Cosmic Encounter, D&D Dungeon Geomorphs, Mage, Nebula 19, Star Fleet Battles* (Boxed Ed.), *Star Fleet Battles Expansion No. 1, Swords & Sorcerers,* and *Treasure of the Silver Dragon.*

Specific games for which we are seeking reviews include: *Dark Stars, Duel Arcane, The Emerald Tablet, The Hammer of Thor, Knights and Knaves, Kung Fu 2100, One-Page Bulge, Thieves' Guild, Thieves' Guild II,* and *Timelag.*

★★★★★★★★★★★

DIMENSION DEMONS (Metagaming); $3.95. Designed by Fred Askew. Boxed, with a 12-page rulebook, 4-page pull-out charts and tables, a 12" x 14" two-color map, 84 die-cut counters, and a die. Two players; playing time 45 minutes to an hour. Published 1980.

DIMENSION DEMONS is an introductory-level game that depicts conflict between two dimensions, and their inhabitants: humans on one side and demons on the other. The map is evenly divided between the demon world on one side and that of human colony Ishom on the other. Units move between the dimensions via transport devices that project units into the opposite dimension. Units may also engage in regular movement and combat, which are both handled in the usual fashion. Demon forces include warriors and breeders. Humans have infantry, hovercraft, and heavy armor. All units are purchased by a point system.

The "two-dimensional" aspect of the game is interesting and unique. The same is true for the rules on interdimensional movement. The game is aptly labeled as introductory; it is simple and plays quickly.

Unfortunately, the game has some problems. At the end of each side's turn, its forces "pop back" into their original dimension. This makes it difficult to get anything going in the way of a sustained attack on the enemy dimension until a transport can be constructed or captured in that dimension. Popback is further complicated by a rules conflict. Another problem with the game is the fact that all three of the optional rules given favor the human player; it might be difficult to convince a demon player to accept inclusion of any of the three.

I can only offer a qualified recommendation for DIMENSION DEMONS, mainly based on its unique topic. Experienced gamers, unless interested in the subject matter, might do better with another Micro.

–Tony Watson

KING OF THE MOUNTAIN (Dimension Six); $15. 156 die-cut counters, 8-page rulebook, 28" x 23" mounted map, 12 character cards, and 2 sheets of command tables, boxed. Playing time 45 min. (2 players) to 3 hours (11 players). Published 1980.

The wizard Promonthorius challenges all who dare to attempt to climb the Citadel at the Peak. The wizard, of course, will be trying to kill all comers. He does so by controlling and directing the creatures he has arrayed throughout the mountain to impede the challengers. The first player to enter the Citadel hex wins a crown and sovereignty over the realm.

One player is the wizard; the rest begin around the edges of the mapboard and are the challenging heroes. Both heroes and (wizard-controlled) monsters must stay on the paths or in the tunnels. Only gargoyles may enter rough terrain – they attack by dropping rocks on the heroes. The game involves semi-hidden movement. Heroes, when in tunnels, remove their counters from the map. Monster counters, along with five dummy counters, are usually turned face down, concealing which of five monster types they are.

KING OF THE MOUNTAIN has several commendable features; it is certainly a playable game. The combat system combines realism with decent gaming strategies. Characters with varying abilities may use various weapons with contrasting effects against the different monsters. Wounds sustained affect both travel speed and attack ability. In addition, the play balance is good. Against one hero (the two-player game), the wizard may move only two monsters per turn. Against ten heroes, twenty monsters may move per turn.

KING OF THE MOUNTAIN has drawbacks, however. Some are petty annoyances; others are larger problems. The map doesn't always coincide with the hex grid. The counters are

oversized. The mapboard begins to fray at the folds after 10 or more games. The graphics are bland.

The greatest drawback might be the suggested price, $15. This is a nice game, but the gaming concepts and packaging involved are not nearly as enticing as many of the $12 games on the market. At $8 I might recommend it; for $15, I won't.

–David Ladyman

LAND OF THE RISING SUN (FGU); $17.95. Designed by Lee Gold. One 152-page booklet, two character sheets, three referee sheets, boxed. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1980. (Not included, but necessary for play: 6- and 10-sided dice.)

This is a "Nippon" game, competition for *Bushido* (reviewed, TSG 29). It is based on *Chivalry & Sorcery*, but you don't need C&S to play.

LOTRS is a very impressive effort. Lee Gold spent a little time in Japan, and a lot of time studying the subject. Her game is complete and authentic. There are provisions for non-human characters, the influence of the stars, the effects of weather, and the rebirth of characters. There are an extensive treatment of magic, a considerable collection of creatures, and a respectful handling of society and customs. There are many helpful illustrations. The LOTRS box contains not merely a game, but a culture. (And, marvel of marvels, it includes an index!)

Unfortunately, we are playing about eight dollars for that gratuitous box. (C&S, unboxed, sells for only $10.00.) Also, many people will not be able to appreciate the virtues of LOTRS because it is based so heavily on the arcane C&S game system. Learning LOTRS without a solid background in C&S is easier than mastering a Zen discipline, but not much.

LOTRS is a beautiful treasure in an unopenable package. Recommended to zealots, and as a source-book for D&D.

–Forrest Johnson

QUIRKS (Eon); $12. Box contains 8-page rulebook, 138 cards and tokens, cardboard slide calculator, 5" x 7" "climate track." 1-4 players; playing time 30-60 minutes. Published 1980.

This game is hard to describe. Each player uses his hand of "trait" cards to create "quirks" – organisms which combine 2 or 3 traits. (A typical quirk might have pincers, a furry body, and a sting.) The climate keeps changing. A quirk which easily won an "upper niche" in the ocean might find itself gasping in the desert. There is a solitaire variant, and simplified rules for children are also supplied.

QUIRKS is hard to describe, but easy to play. A high school student can easily master the rules, but a college professor might enjoy the richness of play – the quirks never repeat. And every player will get a laugh out of the strange creatures he finds himself creating.

QUIRKS does have some serious flaws. The worst – manipulating all those little cards and tokens can be a pain for persons of DX 15 or lower. Also, though the rules are short and precise, they are very hard to understand at first reading, and this game will be of little interest to the hard-core wargamer.

Nevertheless, this is a good family game. With three games on the market, Eon has three winners.

–Forrest Johnson

TAU CETI 2015 AD (Swedish Game Production, Box 18, S-590 40 Kisa, Sweden); $7.00. Designed by Derek Gould. One 16½" x 23½" map sheet with charts, 130 die-cut counters, two energy-points status sheets, three zip-lock storage bags, one 6" x 8½", 8-page rulebook (with errata sheet), cover sheet with charts, bagged. Two players; playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1980.

TAU CETI 2015 AD seems to be an international effort: the company has an address in Sweden, but the designer's address is in Hong Kong! Too bad the game itself isn't as impressive. TAU CETI is a game of tactical combat between two alien races, the Kraa and the H'ren, on a planet of Tau Ceti in the near future. Units include heavy and light tanks, hovercraft, scouts, ion cannon, plasma launchers, remote bombs, and cyborg teams. The two sides hammer away at each other with their various weapons over the course of ten unmemorable scenarios in an apparent attempt to cleanse Tau Ceti of the verminous opposing race – sort of an alien *Starship Troopers* without the bugs. Ho hum.

TAU CETI 2015 AD does have a few interesting features that lift it above your run-of-the-mill combat game. Units have energy-point totals, rather than set movement allowances and combat factors, which may be allotted to these purposes as need arises, much like the action points of GDW's *Snapshot*. The environmental influences, ranging from ion storms to micrometeorites, can spice up an otherwise dull game. And, though there are some ambiguities, the author's command of English is sufficient to put many of our native designers to shame.

Unfortunately, the game has an amateurish feel – especially in the graphics – too often found with small companies. Many of the charts look typed up rather than printed. Energy-point totals are not very high for some units, making them almost useless. And a loophole in the rules allowing immobile ion cannons and plasma launchers to fire while in unarmed hovercraft and to add their energy reserved for defense together into one total makes these units combine into near-invincible fighters – a quick way to win some of the already unbalanced scenarios.

So while TAU CETI 2015 AD does have its assets and will undoubtedly have its champions, the liabilities make the asking price of $7 a bit too steep – unless you want to buy the game as a gesture toward improving international relations.

–William A. Barton

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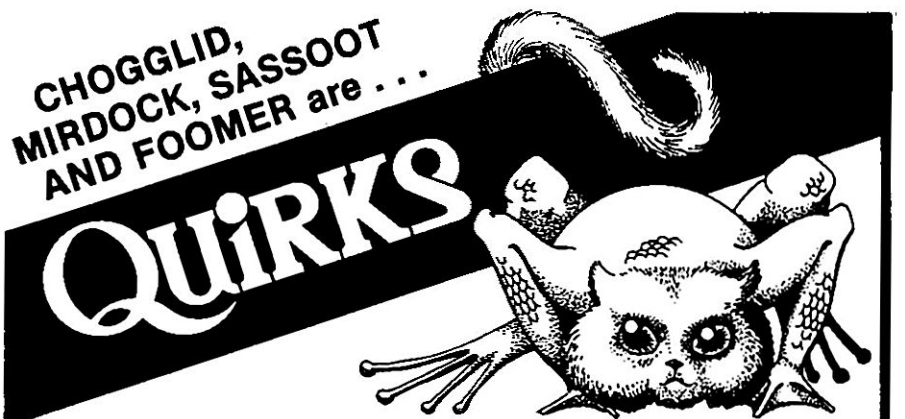

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SUPPLEMENTS

DUCK POND (Judges Guild); $5.98. Designed by Rudy Kraft. Approved for *RuneQuest.* 60-page 8½" x 11" booklet. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1980.

Maybe someone at Judges Guild takes note of rave reviews; this supplement is patterned closely on *Duck Tower* (reviewed TSG 29). Once again – a hundred rooms with personalized monsters, peculiar "found objects" and ample possibility for fighting, puzzle-solving, and negotiation.

As before, the background and detail are excellent. The GM has freedom to control the flow of the adventure. This supplement is reusable; it would take a pretty long marathon session to clean out DUCK POND.

But here are the usual trademarks of Judges Guild – poor art and sloppy editing. Also, one can get tired of Rudy Kraft's sense of humor. (Adventurers may find "an orange leather ball, .3 meters in diameter," or be attacked by Yogi the Bearwalker.)

A fine adventure, though not quite as polished as *Duck Tower.*

–Forrest Johnson

EXPEDITION TO THE BARRIER PEAKS (TSR); $5.50. Designed by Gary Gygax. Supplement to AD&D. Six maps, 31-page instruction booklet, 35 p. separate picture booklet. 2 or more players; playing time 1 hour. Published 1980.

This scenario is recommended for 8-12 level characters. The Grand Duchy of Geoff has been

plagued by the genetic spinoffs of a huge meteor that recently crashed in the area. The players are charged to locate the satellite and destroy the residents(?) thereof. Upon arrival they are confronted by a large metal capsule.

The whole business gets very sticky from that point on. The party is confronted by space-age technology and the aftermath of a virulent disease. Robots, anti-grav belts, laser rifles, etc., are to be found and dealt with. The game is full of surprises and new monsters.

The only real drawback is that the engineer of this module presents some of the more common monsters, and familiar ones (such as the bulette, intellect devourer, roper, and many more) as natives of other planets. This can get tedious as the DM tries to palm off the familiar old couatl as an alien.

But on the whole, this module was highly interesting, full of spice and flavor. I recommend it for anyone who is interested in something new, or even as a way to incorporate space-age technology into the game system.

–Kirby Griffis

THE IRON WIND (Iron Crown Enterprises); $8.00. Designed by Peter C. Fenlon Jr., Stephen E. Moffatt, Olivia H. Johnson, Terry K. Amthor, Heike Kubasch, and S. Coleman Charlton. One 8½" x 11", 68-page book. Numbers of players and playing time variable. Published in 1980.

Touted as another "universal" play aid, usable with any fantasy role-playing system, THE IRON WIND is the story of the Mur Fostisyr ("Land of the Blue Light") and its people, and – more specifically – their condition and corruption under the evil influence of the Iron Wind. In an "I-was-there-and-saw-it" narrative, the book gives the history of the region, describes the tribes of the Ky'taari, the Fustir-Ghost, the Syrkakar and the Udahir and warns of the minions of the Iron Wind. Descriptions of temples and strongholds, and of herbs, poisons, and the military organizations of Mur Fostisyr complete the package.

Mur Fostisyr provides a setting for a fantasy campaign that is a bit different from the usual mucking around in dungeons and labyrinths. Some of the traps and obstacles described – if not exactly original – should give even the most powerful player-characters a run for their gold pieces. The graphics, though often crude, are appropriate, and the parchment-like cover and golden paper add to the book's attractiveness.

Unfortunately, like most such "universal" aids, THE IRON WIND is mostly couched in D&D terms (20th level fireballs, 10th level fighters, etc.), making it difficult to use with other fantasy systems without extensive revisions. Other problems crop up, too. The use of script type for much of the text becomes distracting after a while. The map of the Mur Fostisyr area is almost useless, especially for locating individual cities and structures, the scale being such that even cities are so tiny and so obscured by the landscape, a magnifying glass is needed to find them.

In spite of these flaws, an imaginative gamemaster should be able to make much of THE IRON WIND as an addition to his fantasy campaign – or as a campaign in itself. Non-D&Ders will have to do some extra work to fit it into their systems, but should find the result quite worth the time spent.

–William A. Barton

LEY SECTOR (Judges Guild); $4.98. Approved for *Traveller.* One 22" x 34" map and one 8½" x 11" 32-page booklet. Number of players and playing time variable. Published 1980.

For those travellers who are tired of starfaring in the Spinward Marches and haven't either the time or the inclination to create their own star sectors, Judges Guild offers the LEY SECTOR – 16 new subsectors, 411 new planets on the fringe of the Imperium. The large stellar map gives you an overview of the entire Ley Sector on one side and eight different planetary maps for use in planetfall adventures on the other. The handy guide-book not only contains subsector maps and planetary stats, all set up in the same format as GDW's *The Spinward Marches,* but includes encounter charts and tables for in-space and on-planet adventuring, plus descriptions of two new Imperial ship types, the 400-ton Corvette (Type LE) and the 1000-ton Colonial Fleet Cruiser (Type CPF).

The complete sector map of Ley will be especially appreciated by those *Traveller* players who have been irritated by having to flip from page to page in the *Spinward Marches* supplement in order to find out where they are when crossing from one subsector to another. Such items as the in-space encounter tables will be welcome to those who have tired of the limited choices on the standard *Traveller* tables. And at last we get to learn more about the mysterious Syndymic Empire (spelled, curiously, Sydymic in several places) mentioned on the subsector maps with the recent *Tancred* and *Darthanon Queen* adventures.

The only real problem I see in LEY SECTOR, aside from the varying spellings of Syndymic/Sydymic, is that on the sector map, the borders of the individual subsectors are not marked. This may cause some difficulty in keying travel on the big map to the guidebook, but simply drawing in the borders with a marker will easily remedy this.

LEY SECTOR should add to the fun and enjoyment of anyone's *Traveller* campaign. I recommend it to all travellers seeking new worlds to conquer.

–William A. Barton

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PORT XANATATH (Group One); $6.95. Approved for *Traveller*. 17" x 22" full-color map, 8½" x 11" 18-page book, zip-lock bag. Number of players and playing time variable. Published 1980.

PORT XANATATH is the third in Group One's series of *Traveller* adventures. This one shows definite improvement over the fledgling company's previous efforts, especially in the area of graphics. The map shows the entire interior section of the port, plus areas of the exterior, overlaid with a hexagonal grid to aid in locating characters in the Port as opposed to the vague planetary maps of *Pen-Latol's World* and *Mission to Zephor*. The rulebook describes all the important locations of the base, as well as outlining its history and providing stats and mini-biographies of some of its prominent citizens. Random encounter tables and a description of the Port's unique general purpose robots round out the package.

The wealth of detail provided about the ex-alien pirate base is what makes PORT XANATATH useful to a *Traveller* referee. It gives him a nice nook for some of the less lawful characters in his campaign to do a little trade in extra-legal goods (drugs, slaves, etc.) or perhaps to hide out from the authorities for a while.

PORT XANATATH's main failing – if it can be called that – is that it is really less of an adventure than a setting for one. Due to the tight security measures of the complex – general purpose robots mounting FGMP-15s, mind probes to detect ulterior motives on the part of anyone entering the area – a referee will have to do some heavy thinking to come up with an adventure that won't be too tame or else end up with all the player-characters dead, in chains, or worse. There are a few inconsistencies to be found, too (lasers and plasma guns rampant on this law level 3 world), and the lack of a damage table for the special robots is a bad oversight. But, a good referee can fill in for these lapses.

I believe PORT XANATATH should prove useful to most *Traveller* refs – even if only as a source of ideas rather than as an actual adventure. Even those who were less than thrilled with the two earlier adventures might consider giving this one a try.

–William A. Barton

76 PATRONS (GDW); $3.98. Designed by Loren K. Wiseman. *Traveller* supplement 6. One 5½" x 8½" 48-page booklet. Referee and one or more players; playing time variable. Published 1980.

You're running a free-form *Traveller* adventure, no set plans, all action determined by the encounter charts in book 3. Suddenly your players announce they're searching for a patron and make the roll successfully. You roll on the patron chart and come up with – a scout. That's it. What do you do now? You weren't prepared for this; your mind is suddenly a blank. An assassin you could have handled, an avenger perhaps – patrons such as these might suggest an offer. But a scout? Such a moment is when GDW's latest *Traveller* supplement, 76 PATRONS will prove its worth. As its title suggests, 76 PATRONS provides the *Traveller* referee with 76 impromptu NPC patrons, most keyed to the *Traveller* patron chart, each with a mission of varying degrees of difficulty for player characters. Sixteen of these are mercenary tickets ranging from platoon to brigade operations, some complimentary to the sample tickets in *Mercenary*. The rest are adventures for one, two to six, five to twelve, or nine or more players.

76 PATRONS is especially handy in that each of the 60 non-mercenary scenarios offered may have from three to six different outcomes, depending on a dice roll (or the referee's discretion). This makes it possible to run the same patron encounter more than once and is particularly useful in cases where the players may own or have read the supplement themselves. The single-player scenarios also open up the game to play by one referee and one player, which helps when you're short on players but don't wish to play the non-refereed version.

The scenarios presented in 76 PATRONS are rather sketchy, though – even shorter in most cases than the "Amber Zone" scenarios in the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*. Thus the referee will still find himself having to do a lot of filling in. But then, referees are an imaginative lot and this shouldn't prove overly difficult. The only real problem is that some of the alternative outcomes of many of the scenarios are incredibly dull ("All goes as planned, there are no encounters, players are paid after 10 weeks and let go," etc.) – not even worth playing unless you just want to give the player some easy cash. Some refs may find players reluctant to accept the paltry sums offered for a few of the missions (as low as 500 CR a week) and will need to make alterations.

Still, even if the referee finds it necessary to do a lot of tinkering with the scenarios as presented, 76 PATRONS should prove a useful addition to the *Traveller* referee's tools-of-the-trade in creating interesting role-playing encounters.

–William A. Barton

'*RuneQuest* is the most playable and elegant fantasy role-playing [game] designed to date.' –ARES MAGAZINE. '*RuneQuest* is for those who want a fast-playing active game and who don't mind developing social systems and cultures for their world. I highly recommend *RuneQuest* for those who want an introduction to role-playing, or those who desire a refreshing change.' –FANTASTIC SCIENCE FICTION. 'All these roles are presented with explanations of *the reason why* each rule is present, as well as an ongoing story that illustrates both the application of the rules and the flow of the game. No other ruleset shows quite so well how the game is to be *played*.' –ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE. 'A lot of thought has gone into this game. It shows. It is playable yet realistic. You don't need several supplement books to play it. Even though it was designed to fit one particular world, it could easily be used for any world. Since this game contains a logical system, almost anything can be added to the matrix it presents. A gem of a game. You won't be disappointed.' –THE SPACE GAMER MAGAZINE. 'Aha! Finally, a book a beginner can read and understand. This book is superb. It tells you what a fantasy role-playing game is, how to create an adventurer, spells out the mechanics of playing, tells much about magic–and lots more. Interlaced throughout the book are the sagas of Rurik the Restless [and] Ariella the Priestess...specific examples of how the game might occur as it is played. Beautiful!' –The Dragon, in RECREATIONAL COMPUTING.

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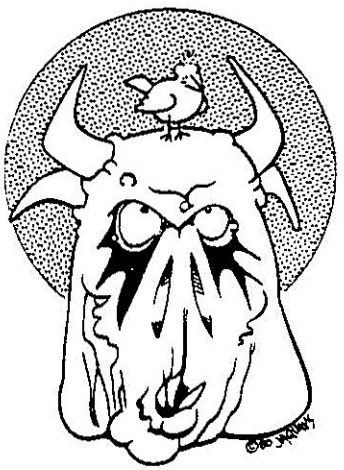

PLAY AIDS

D&D MONSTER AND TREASURE ASSORTMENT LEVELS 1-9 (TSR); $3.00. Play aid for D&D. 34-page 8½" x 11" booklet. Published 1980.

MONSTER AND TREASURE ASSORTMENT contains 900 monsters, 900 treasures, and containers for the latter. The "monsters" are pre-rolled guardians of almost any type from stirges to type V demons. "Treasures" are sets of magic and money.

The lists are arranged according to level in groups of 100's. If the DM so desires, random generation (by rolling 10-sided or percentile dice) may be used to determine room contents. This would be of great use in impromptu or random encounters.

Thirty-four pages of *lists*? And a lot of details are obscure – the DM has to create spells to go with magic items, and describe some monsters that aren't in the manual.

Recommended to DMs who suffer from occasional or temporary mental blocks.

–Elisabeth Barrington

TRAVELLER RECORD SHEETS (Paranoia Press); $1.25 to $2.50. Designed by Chuck Kallenbach II. Approved for *Traveller*. Pads of 30 sheets, 5½" x 8½" to 8½" x 11". Published 1980.

Paranoia Press has published several pads of approved *Traveller* record sheets to help tidy up your bookkeeping chores in those long SF role-playing sessions. So far, pads of Personal Data Sheets, Starship Logs, Ship's Papers/Ship Design Worksheets, and System Data Sheets have rolled from Paranoia's presses. Individual prices and descriptions are as follows:

Personal Data Sheet: $1.50. The PDS is a 5½" x 8½" blue sheet, backprinted, for *Traveller* character information. Divided into seven sections, it provides for more info than even Judges Guild's *Traveller Logbook*, though there are some errors.

Starship Log: $1.25. The Log, a 5½" x 8½" yellow sheet, will come in handy to those players who run a lot of cargo. Here you can list your departure and arrival times, destinations, your income in cargo carried, passengers and mail, and the total expenditures for your trip, including fuel, repairs, ammo, and salaries.

Ship's Papers/Ship Design Worksheet: $2.50. An 8½" x 11" green, backprinted list of starship info compatible with both Book 2 *Starships* and *High Guard* vessels. The Worksheet enables you to list the components of your dream ship – hull and drives, weaponry, screens, vehicles, crew, and options – their costs and how much tonnage they'll consume. The Papers provide you with the ship's profile, listing said components, computer programs on board, and the 20 most important members of your crew. Three-hole punched to fit in your notebook. Vital for *Traveller* shipbuilders.

System Data Sheet: $2.00. 8½" x 11", also three-hole punched, the SDS allows a referee to customize a star system beyond the usual UPP information rolled up. It records the information on the number of stars and/or planets in the system, position from the sun of each planet and terrain types to be found on the main planet, as well as the normal type of starport, world size, atmosphere, etc. – plus leaves plenty of space for extra remarks in case the history, culture, or other data of a world are necessary for play. Definitely helpful to the referee – though if more than one planet of a system is used, a separate sheet must be filled out per planet.

All of these record sheets are well-conceived and quite impressive in appearance and content. They should provide an excellent aid for both *Traveller* players and referees – especially the Personal Data Sheet.

–William A. Barton

TRAVELLER REFEREE SCREEN (Judges Guild); $2.50. Authorized play aid for *Traveller*. Four 8½" x 11" cardstock sheets, front and back printed. Published 1979.

Those resourceful role-playing-supplement people at Judges Guild have done an inestimable service to *Traveller* referees – and players – everywhere with this item. Nearly every important table from *Traveller* Books 1-4 concerning combat, encounters (human and animal), psionic use and starship maneuvers can be found on the four sheets of cardstock that make up the TRAVELLER REFEREE SCREEN. Never again will it be necessary for the players to sit dozing off while the referee leafs frantically through Books 1 and 3 to find the exact tables to determine the effects of a laser rifle at medium range on an evading eater-with-psionic-attack-abilities-and-armor-as-cloth.

The nicest feature of the REF SCREEN is its combat charts. The to-hit roll for every personal weapon in the *Traveller* rule books – including *Mercenary* – is separately listed for every range from close to extreme and against every type of armor from nothing to battle dress. Of course, factors such as weapon skill, modifiers for strength, dexterity, target evading, and so forth must still be figured in mentally, but the charts do simplify the process quite a bit.

One class of weapon the charts seem to omit is the bow as outlined in *Citizens of the Imperium*. This shouldn't be a problem, however, unless you have an abnormal number of barbarians running around in your campaign. The only real problem with the charts as a whole is that if actually used as a screen, their effectiveness will be considerably reduced. When I'm reffing I usually find it more advantageous to use something else for a screen and keep the charts of the SCREEN itself at my side for a quick reference.

However it is used, though, by referee or by player, the TRAVELLER REFEREE SCREEN will make for smoother play in even the wildest campaign.

–Willaim A. Barton

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COMPUTER GAMES

AIRMAIL PILOT (Instant Software); $7.95. 16K cassette for the TRS-80, Apple II, and PET. One player; playing time ten minutes. Published 1980.

You are in the pilot seat of a single engine Jenny airplane departing from Columbus, Ohio, loaded with mail for Chicago. Flaps and rudder on your plane can be controlled to ascend, descend, or turn. There are three possible refueling stops enroute. Along the way you may encounter such hazards as icing at higher elevations, closed landing strips due to snow, floods, or wind, and lightning storms that can ground or even destroy your plane.

AIRMAIL PILOT is quickly learned and easily played. Survival is a challenge and you quickly become involved with the action. The graphics are adequate; highlights are the lightning storm and the opening sequence where the Jenny takes off trailing a banner with the program title on it.

This game is short and easily mastered. Trying to beat your best time is the next challenge, but all too soon that, too, lacks interest. Sound would have added to the action, but my TRS-80 version was silent. Also, side one of my tape contained several program errors. Fortunately, the copy on side two worked flawlessly.

If you are looking for a realistic airflight simulation, AIRMAIL PILOT is not for you. Since its price is on the lower end of the software spectrum, I do recommend it for those looking for a quick, easy, enjoyable game with limited staying power.

–Bruce Campbell

INVASION FORCE (Radio Shack); $14.95. Cassette for TRS-80 Level II, 16K. 10 levels of difficulty. One player; playing time 30 min.-1 hour. Published 1979.

INVASION FORCE puts the player in the commander's seat of the *USS Hephaestus*, a large battle cruiser. This cruiser has a wide range of weapons, including triton missiles, antimatter missiles, masers, and an experimental ray. The *USS Hephaestus* is battling the fearsome Jovians, which have two types of cruisers (battle and command). INVASION FORCE is (if you hadn't noticed yet) a basic "Star Trek" type game with 100 quadrants.

The graphics and the speed of this game are excellent. The game also gives the player a variety of weapons to use against the enemy. The programming also allows the Jovians to move (away from your fire) during combat.

INVASION FORCE has a few minor drawbacks. For example, once you have mastered the game, destroying Jovians is rather easy; as a result the game becomes tiresome. Also, the game does not have sound.

If you don't have a *Star Trek* game and want one, get INVASION FORCE. Otherwise, spend your $15 on something else.

–Glenn Mai

PINBALL (Acorn); cassette $14.95, disk $20.95. Program by John Allen for the TRS-80. Five levels of difficulty. One player; playing time 5-10 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1980.

Lights flash, buzzers hoot, the ball hits two bumpers – smacks into triple bonus – bangs in and out of double bonus – is caught wildly bouncing in the mystery square until it drops just out of reach of your flippers.

This machine language program has excellent sound and graphics. It allows variable ball speed and power of release. The program very nicely simulates the never-straight path of a gravity-tugged pinball.

As a program, I can find no flaw – the more I see it, the more impressed I am. As a game, I found myself growing tired of it more quickly than I do pinball games in the arcade. Perhaps it's the limited number of targets or the absence of sequential targets to get a "special." At least part of my unhappiness is the loss of the fine art of hip nudge. Maybe you call it "body english" (or even cheating) but that subtle tap which saves the ball from certain death is sorely missed.

As a program, a strong endorsement, as a game, a qualified yes.

–Jon Mishcon

PIRATE'S COVE (Adventure International, POB 3435, Longwood, FL 32750); $14.95 by Scott Adams. 16K cassette for the TRS-80, Apple II, and PET. One or more players; playing time varies. Published 1980.

From Scott Adams' popular *Adventure*

WRITING REVIEWS FOR THE SPACE GAMER

Capsule Reviews

Most of the reviews we print will be "capsule" reviews – 400 words or less. We pay $5 for each capsule review accepted. We want to run a review for *every* new s-f or fantasy game or supplement.

Each capsule review should be five paragraphs long and contain:

(1) Basic information. Present these facts, in this order: NAME OF GAME (Publisher); price. Designer. (If applicable: "Supplement to ---," "Companion to ---," or similar note.) Format: list of components, with sizes of maps and rulebooks, number of counters, etc. Number of players; playing time. Publication date.

(2) General description of the game: background, the sides, course of play, special features, etc.

(3) Strong points. Discuss what is good about the game; in every game, there IS something worthwhile. "Fun" is a useless adjective. Be specific.

(4) Weak points. Every game has its problems, too. If the only faults you can find are minor ones, say so. If the game is fatally flawed, come right out and SAY SO. If you can phrase your criticisms as suggestions for improvement, do so.

(5) Summation. Your overall opinion of the game. Who should and should not buy it, and why.

All reviews must be signed; the reviewer's name *will* be printed. No game may be reviewed by its designer, by a playtester, or by an employee of the publisher. (Designer's articles are welcome, but must be billed as such!) Final note: If you can write a complete review in less than the full 400 words, by all means do so.

This review format is designed to encourage fairness and to give the reader enough information to let him decide whether he wants to buy that game. Keep that in mind when you write. This is a short review, *not* a complete analysis. For those who want to write longer reviews, each issue will have one or two –

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These will be game reviews 1,000 to 2,000 words long. They should contain *all the above information,* plus whatever else the reviewer wants to say. They may be written in any format. A featured review may cover either a new game or one that has been on the market for some time. If TSG has not already printed a capsule review, write one and submit it at the same time. We may even use both.

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series, this program places you in a London flat. Using one and two word commands (north, get book, go window, inventory, etc.) you command the computer through this mythical world. The right commands, at the proper place, while you are carrying the necessary items, will allow you to travel to Pirate's Island, build a boat, sail to Treasure Island, and recover the treasures.

PIRATE'S COVE is a good example of Scott Adams' imagination and humor. Often you think a problem is finally solved, and suddenly some new problem arises that also must be overcome. In the midst of such ebbings of success and frustration, the occasional humor is especially appreciated. Technical features include a split screen that displays your current position on top and scrolls on the bottom only. The bottom portion of the screen is used to query for orders (with a blinking cursor) and to make responses. Games can be saved.

This program has no graphics or sound. Also, like a good mystery book, once it is read and the mystery is solved, it will probably be some time before you will want to use it again.

PIRATE'S COVE is a good first adventure (some of the others are harder), but also entertaining for the experienced adventurer.

–Bruce Campbell

SIMUTEK PACKAGE I (Simutek); $14.95. Cassette for TRS-80 Level II, 16K. One player; playing time varies. Published 1979.

This is a package of 5 different space games: *Graphic-Trek* (an average Star Trek game), *Star Wars* (where the object is to destroy TIE fighters, Darth Vader, and the Death Star), *Space Target* (the goal of this game is to eliminate a target as it flies across the screen), *Invasion Worg* (a game where you must defend the solar system from the Worg invaders), and *Saucers* (where you attempt to zap the aliens with your laser).

Graphic-Trek's star bases are done very well. It also has sound for explosions. *Star Wars, Space Target,* and *Saucers* have very good graphics. Finally, *Invasion Worg* (which I enjoyed the most) allows players to direct his armies around the solar system (via the keyboard) against the invaders.

Unfortunately, *Graphic-Trek*'s graphics (excluding the star bases) are very poor. IF the *Enterprise*'s warp engines are damaged, the movement becomes tiresome. The Klingons do not move during combat. *Star Wars, Space Target,* and *Saucers* get boring after the first few games. Finally, *Worg* gets to be boring when the player discovers how to defeat the Worgs.

This package is not worth the $14.95.

–Glenn Mai

STAR TREK III.4 (The Software Exchange); $14.95 by Lance Micklus. 16K TRS-80 cassette (also includes three lesser programs), 96-page rulebook, and program listings. One player; playing time 2-3 hours. Published 1979.

Of the multitude of Star Trek games, this one is probably the best known. Its universe is 8 x 8 x 3 and each quadrant is 8 x 8. There are 20 Klingon battle cruisers to attack with your phasers and photon torpedoes. You also control science and ship's computers, warp drive, impulse engines, long and short range sensors, and can call status and damage reports. Your objective is to destroy all the Klingons and use your science computer to locate five habitable planets within a given time limit. Astronomical hazards include pulsars, class O stars, and black holes.

Many good features justify this game's reputation. The graphics, particularly for the battle sequence, are excellent. Your search area is three times as large as is usual for 16K Star Trek games. Searching for habitable planets also adds another dimension to the usual challenge of destroying Klingons. If you need to take a break, the game can be easily saved. Also, the program listing has proven useful. Since I do not have a printer, the listing facilitated learning the techniques for "shaking" the display and saving games, which I have used for other programs.

The habitable planets are distributed in a pattern that, after a few games, is recognized. This recognition can significantly reduce required search time. There are not variable skill levels. I added a simple modification that varies the Klingon's energy level and the power of their weapons. The game could be improved by making it run in real time.

STAR TREK III.4 has provided many hours of entertainment. If you are looking for a moderately complex space simulation, I recommend this one.

–Bruce Campbell

SUPER NOVA (Big Five Software); $14.95. Cassette for the TRS-80. One level of difficulty. One player; playing time 15 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1980.

The screen is filled with asteroids. Your explosive missiles blow the biggies into middle-sized chunks. The chunks can then be split into small hunks. Finally the hunks can be blown out of existence. Sounds easy. Well, if any piece of rock touches you, then it's goodbye. Also there are these six different bad guys shooting at you with varying degrees of accuracy. Of course you can dodge around (acceleration is NOT instantaneous) but that might mean collision with the rocks. You can duck into hyperspace but you never know where you might end up and points are only obtained by blowing up rocks and enemy ships, so you gotta get in there and shoot. You start with one ship and two replacements and get one more replacement for every 10,000 points earned.

This machine language program has fairly good graphics. It is very impressive how ship acceleration and rock motion are handled. Perhaps best of all is that this program in some ways goes beyond the arcade version, as it limits you to 4 live shots on the board at any one time and differentiates shielding for the enemy vessels.

Flaws here are pretty small. No sound. The ship can only fire and turn in 45-degree increments. I think the 10,000-point replacement level is too tough and the game would be better at 5 or 6 thousand.

I found this game to be a real challenge. Recommended for any arcade buff.

–Jon Mishcon

HISTORICAL GAMES

RAID ON IRAN (SJ Games); $3.00. Designed by Steve Jackson. 21" x 16" full-color embassy map, 119 counters in three colors, and ziplock bag. 1 or 2 players; playing time 60 to 90 minutes. Published 1980.

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reached Teheran. American commandos are armed with M16 rifles, M60 light machine guns, Uzi submachine guns, Light Antitank Weapons, satchel charges, mortars, concussion grenades, knock-out gas, tear gas, silenced weapons, and possibly (a player option) a .50 caliber machine gun. Rules cover helicopters (attacking, defending, possibility of break-down), a fake "supply convoy," entry by stealth, Iranian guards, surprise attacks, quiet attacks, increased range for height, wounded commandos, capture of Americans, negotiation, ground evacuation, and the Iranian mobs. These rules all combine and complement each other beautifully. The game is enhanced by a list of options, one picked by each player. By picking a different option each time you play, you can confuse your opponent and make the game more interesting.

There are quite a few exciting and tense moments in the game. In the beginning of the game, players wonder how long till the sentries become alerted. When the Iranian reinforcements start arriving, the American starts losing hope if he hasn't gotten to all of the hostages. Another tense moment is helicopter take off: is the helicopter going to break down or not?

Steve Jackson has tried a new approach with his map and rules. Each consists of one large sheet of "glossy paper." After the game has been put away and taken out several times, the paper will start to rip along the folds. Also, I don't find it too wise to put some of the rules on the back side of the map.

RAID ON IRAN is an enjoyable game, despite some minor faults. Perhaps the second printing will put the rules in booklet form and the map on a better quality paper. I recommend it anyway.

–Bob Von Gruenigen

OFFICIAL ORIGINS AWARDS NOMINATION BALLOT

for the year 1980, to be presented at ORIGINS '81, July 4, 5, and 6, 1981, at San Mateo, California.

The Origins Awards, presented at Origins each year, are an international, popular series of awards aimed at recognizing outstanding achievements in Adventure gaming. They comprise the Charles Roberts Awards for Boardgaming, and the H.G. Wells Awards for Miniatures and Role-Playing Games. An international committee of independent hobbyists administers the combined awards system. They will tabulate the ballots and act as liaison with the Origins sponsors.

This ballot may be reproduced and circulated by any means available, provided its contents are faithfully copied. Clubs and other organizations should circulate copies among their members shortly after the first of the year.

All Gaming Fans are encouraged to vote!

Deadline -- March 31, 1981.

Instructions. Read Carefully: Print legibly or type your nominations. Ballots that are messy or not filled out correctly may not get counted. You may list three nominees per category. It does not matter in what order you list entries. To keep voting as meaningful as possible, please do not make selections in unfamiliar categories. YOU MUST SIGN THE BALLOT! Also include your address. You may vote only once, and send only one ballot per envelope.

INCLUDE A STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE when sending in this ballot if you wish to vote on the final ballot and will not be attending Origins '81. Final balloting will be by mail and by those attending Origins '81, July 4-6, 1981, where the awards will be presented.

Nominations should be based on products produced during the calendar year 1980. Miniature figure series nominations should be for product lines which are either new or have been substantially expanded in 1980. Naturally, all time best nominations are not restricted to 1980. The Hall of Fame category will not appear on the final ballot since the winner is determined by the nominating ballots.

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All Time Best Air Combat Rules:

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Best 1980 Science Fiction or Fantasy Boardgame:

Best 1980 Computer Game (game materials for use on personal computers. Star Trek not eligible):

Best 1980 Initial Release of a Boardgame:
(This refers to the first release by a new company):

Best 1980 Professional Magazine covering Boardgames:

Best 1980 Amateur Magazine covering the Hobby in general:
(Amateur magazines are defined as non-profit efforts not of professional quality which do not provide income for their staffs nor pay for contributions)

Hall of Fame:
(Previous winners of the Hall of Fame are Don Turnbull, 1974; James F. Dunnigan, 1975; Tom Shaw, 1976; Redmond Simonsen, 1977; John Hill, 1978; and Dave Isby, 1979)

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Send in your ballots by March 31, 1981, to one of the following addresses:

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Origins Awards
P.O. Box 787
Troy, Michigan
48099 USA

Letters

My subscription to *The Space Gamer* will expire with issue 36. I do not plan to resubscribe at that time, and rather than simply letting my subscription lapse, I thought I would, out of past loyalty to TSG, pass on my discontent in hopes that it will provide you some insight into my decision.

As a subscriber from TSG 7, I hailed TSG as a beacon in the night – a magazine devoted to the newly growing sci-fi aspect of the wargaming hobby. But as of late TSG has devoted entirely too much space to fantasy. I do not care for the fantasy aspect of the hobby. I am a hardcore sci-fi gamer.

I subscribed to *The Space Gamer,* not *The Fantasy Gamer.* Get back to your roots.

In addition, I feel your subscription rates are way out of line (I realize you are faced with the same double digit inflation we all are), but for $5.00 more than a TSG yearly subscription, I can get two years of *Ares.* Now, granted, *Ares* is also spending too much time on fantasy, but those six games a year are quite an inducement to subscribe.

I have a local game shop that carries TSG in its newsstand and I plan to check up on it from time to time, but until the magazine returns to the field its banner advertises, I will not be resubscribing.

I do thank you for the past entertainment and enjoyment TSG has provided.

Dan Long
Tacoma, WA

I think that if you look through your back issues, you will see that TSG has always *devoted a significant amount of space to fantasy. I am sure you would happily do without "Sam Beowulf" or "Painting Fantasy Miniatures," but a lot of readers liked those features.*

We don't really compete with Ares. *We don't offer you any quantity of fact articles, straight fiction, or games. We do provide game articles, game-related fiction, and reviews which help you choose your own games. We'll continue to cover both SF and fantasy.*

Thanks for your comments.

–FJ

Bob's algorithm for SPI-style hexmaps is cleaner and shorter than mine, but it will only work for hex rows where the first two digits form an even number (i.e., 02yy, 04yy, etc.). This is in part my fault, since the illustration that accompanied my article in TSG 27 only showed the offset numbering for a hex row. It did *not* show that the offset numbering for a hex in a hex row where the first two digits form an odd number (i.e., 01yy, 03yy, etc.) is slightly different. This is precisely the reason why the SPI-style algorithms tend to be messy: you have two similar but not identical cases that you must deal with, depending upon which type of

The difference in offsets can best be summarized by the following table:

XX1	dx	dy	facing
odd	+1	-1	2
		0	3
	-1	-1	6
		0	5
even	+1	0	2
		+1	3
	-1	0	6
		+1	5
both	0	0	0
		-1	1
		+1	4
	all others		7

where XX1 = the first two digits of the central hex
YY1 = the last two digits of the central hex
XX2 and YY2 = the corresponding digits on the other hex
dx = XX2 - XX1
dy = YY2 - YY1

You can code this table up however you want to – nested IFs, CASE statements, in an array – but that's what you have to deal with.

Frankly, my algorithms in TSG 27 *were* poorly done, mostly due to time and pressure: they were hastily translated versions of some quick-and-dirty FORTRAN code I had written some months earlier. I am currently working on some carefully written, running versions – if anyone would like a copy, drop me a letter.

Bruce F. Webster
LPI
3303 NASA Road 1
Houston, TX 77058

This is in response to Jerry Epperson's letter, in TSG 34 concerning my review of the game *High Fantasy.* First, let me say that the letter was well thought out, well written, and by itself could have made a good capsule review by someone who liked the game. And, naturally, I am gratified that intelligent readers are paying heed to the things I write for *The Space Gamer.*

However, there is apparently a misconception held by many people concerning how and why game reviews are written. My primary function as a game reviewer is to suggest how much enjoyment prospective buyers are likely to receive for their money if they should purchase a game. My criticisms of a game are not insults to the designer, condemnation of those who enjoy the game, and – most especially – not based strictly on the gaming mechanics themselves. *High Fantasy* had some interesting features, there was an attempt at integrated gaming systems, and I said these things in my review.

What *High Fantasy* did not offer, *in my opinion,* was gaming pleasure. Yes, that's a subjective opinion! I'm not roadtesting an automobile, or analyzing the sound output of a stereo, I'm reviewing a game. Some of that is going to be based on objective criteria such as game components, but most of it is going to be the subjective criterion: Was the game fun to play?

In the case of *High Fantasy* I did not find it so. It doesn't matter if it was built on older established games while injecting new ideas to make "the balance between T&T and AD&D," and it doesn't even matter if the list of good features is longer than the list of bad features. The question that must be answered remains: Was the game fun to play?

It wasn't. This was not only my own opinion formed in a vacuum. I played the game, as often as possible, over several weeks. I played with different people; all except myself were teenagers or in their early twenties (the prime group of TSG readers). Nobody else liked it either.

I appreciate Mr. Epperson taking the time to comment on my review. I hope it is clear now why I write reviews. Anyone who ever has specific questions or comments about anything I ever write may feel free to correspond directly.

Ronald Pehr
1689A 8th St.
Langley AFB, VA
23665

Note: We do not run a complete address with a letter, unless the writer specifically requests it. Correspondence to others may be addressed care of this magazine.

–FJ

In issue 33, you ran a full page advertisement for the Schubel & Son correspondence game *StarMaster* . . . The ad is misleading about the cost of the game.

It baldly states that "Thereafter, turns are $2.50 each." Enclosed is a copy of the fee schedule included in the rulebook they sent me when I subscribed to the game. As you can see, $2.50 is only the tip of the iceberg, a minor point they chose not to reveal until a customer has sent in his money. Enclosed as well is the letter of complaint I sent them, and the reply scribbled on the back. As you can see, they give me the choice of going along or taking a refund. I chose instead to file a complaint with the U.S. Postal Service.

It may be that this escalating fee schedule is no news to you, since *The Tribes of Crane* has been around for a while, and I note that in the company report George Schubel is careful to say "The base turn fee cost . . ." leading me to assume that additional costs are levied in that game as well. However, this is not the case with *StarMaster,* as in all of their ads I have seen, they never refer to a base cost, just to a per turn cost.

Steven A List
Levittown, PA

More detail in the ad might be wise – but if your letter produced a prompt offer to refund your money, we don't think you've been taken advantage of. Comments from the company, and from other readers, solicited on this. *–SJ*

News & Plugs

SPI was recently visited by freed Iranian hostage Richard Queen, who said he spent part of his captivity playing wargames. Titles included *War Between the States, Lord of the Rings,* and *The Creature That Ate Sheboygan.* Queen had trouble finding opponents, since the Iranians wouldn't let him talk to anyone for five months.

Oh, Dem Changes Dept.: Michael Stackpole, premier game designer for Flying Buffalo, has left FBI; and Ben C. Ostrander, Metagaming associate and former *Space Gamer* editor, has left Metagaming.

Edu-Ware offers *The Prisoner,* a program for the Apple based on the well-known television series. Available for $29.95 "at computer stores in finer villages everywhere."

Reston Publishing, a subsidiary of Prentice-Hall, has acquired *High Fantasy.* The new edition is available hardbound ($14.95) and softbound ($12.95). A second book is planned.

Microsoft offers 16K RAM card to expand the 48K Apple. It cannot be used in addition to the Apple language card. Suggested retail price: $195.

The Good Guys by JD

THE SAGA OF "HUNK" ON THE STARDESTROYER CONTINUES ...(I THINK)...
NO! I'LL NEVER TALK !!...
WHAT'S IN THAT BOX? MORE FIENDISH EVIL TORTURE DEVICES?!...
... UH... NO, ACTUALLY, IT'S A MILLION CREDITS, ONE TICKET TO FREEDOM, AND A NEW INFLATABLE SEX DROID...
WAIT, A SEX DROID! ON SECOND THOUGHT, MAYBE I WILL... TALK .... (WOW)...
THAT'S WHAT WE FIGURED.....
NOT ONLY DID I GIVE IN... BUT I FORGOT TO ASK WHAT RACE THE SEX DROID WAS FOR ....
JDW
SOME WHERE, IN INTERSTELLAR COSMIC SPACE;
OK BORIS, THE REBEL RESCUE FORCE IS ALL ON BOARD AND READY TO SAVE "HUNK" AND WHAT'S HER FACE?... UH...
YOU MEAN OUR LEADER, THE PRINCESS?
YEA... HER...
GOOD, TELL THE CAPTAIN TO MAKE THE JUMP INTO HYPER-SPACE !!
THE CAPTAIN JUMPS INTO HYPER-SPACE !!...
NO WONDER THE REBELS ARE IN TROUBLE...
EYAHG!!
GROWL!! ROAR!
NINK!
MEANWHILE, BACK TO SMELLY ON THE STAR-DESTROYER...
GROWR!
CRUNCH
SOUND THE ALARM !!, THE BIG HAIRY THING IS ESCAPING !!...
I'VE GOT HIM UNDER CONTROL BUT...
MILK BONE
THIS IS OUR LAST BOX! GET SOME STORMTROOPERS!

NEXT: THE ENCOUNTER...

Two releases due from GDW in 1981 are *Invasion: Earth,* a *Traveller* boardgame, and *The Best of the Journal,* a compilation of articles from out-of-print issues of the *Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society.*

Strategic Simulations has released two new computer wargames, *Computer Conflict* ($39.95) and *Computer Air Combat* ($59.95).

Calendar

February 6-8, 1981: GENCON SOUTH '81. Gaming con. Contact Gencon South Convention Comittee, 5333 Santa Monica Blvd N, Jacksonville, FL 32207.

February 14-16, 1981: DUNDRACON VI. FRP gaming con, Oakland, CA. Contact @ 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

March 13-15, 1981: COASTCON. Royal D'Iberville. Contact Coastcon 81, P.O. Box 6025, Biloxi, MS 39532.

March 20-21, 1981: SIMCON III. Con for fantasy role-playing games. University of Rochester in Rochester, NY. Contact SimCon III, Box 5142, Rochester, NY 14627.

March 20-22, 1981: LUNACON '81. Films, art show, wargaming. Contact LunaCon '81, P.O. Box 204, Brooklyn, NY 11230.

April 4-5, 1981. UNHSGC Spring Gaming Festival. Con featuring miniatures, board games, and RPG. Contact R. Bradford Chase, UNH Simulations Games Club, Memorial Union Building, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824.

April 9-12, 1981: COLLEGECON 2. F&SF con. Contact CollegeCon 2, c/o Larry Taylor, University of Houston, N-23 UC, Program Council, 4800 Calhoun, Houston, TX 77004.

May 1-3, 1981 (note date change): USACON 3. Gaming con for SF&F, RP, and boardgaming at University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL. Contact Leo Vaulin, 5856 Lisloy Dr., Mobile, AL 36608.

May 22-25, 1981: GRIMCON III. F/SF gaming con, Oakland Hyatt House, 455 Hegenberger Road, Oakland, CA 94612. Contact P.O. Box 4153, Berkeley, CA 94704.

July 3-5, 1921: ORIGINS '81: To be held in Dunfee Motel, San Mateo, CA. Contact Origins '81, P.O. Box 5833, San Jose, CA 95150.

July 17-19. ODYSSEY '81. Con featuring all kinds of gaming. Sponsored by the UNH Simulations Games Club; for information contact Odyssey '81, R. Bradford Chase, UNH Simulations Games Club, Memorial Union Building, Durham, N.H. 03824.

July 24-26, 1981: ATLANTICON. New wargaming convention. Contact AtlantiCon, Inc., P.O. Box 15405, Baltimore, MD 21220.

August 21-24, 1981: GENCON XIII. FRPG & new gaming releases. Contact GenCon XIII, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

September 3-7, 1981: DENVENTION TWO. SF con. Contact Denvention Two, P.O. Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211 or (303) 433-9774.

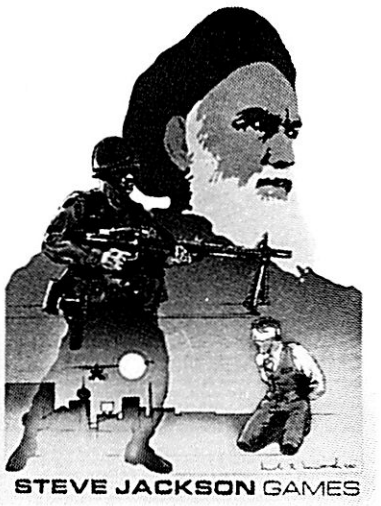
September 11-13, 1981: DRAGON FLIGHT, a FRP con, to be held in Seattle. Contact The Brass Dragon Society, P.O. Box 33872, Seattle, WA 98133.

CONVENTION ORGANIZERS – let us know about your con! Free publicity never hurts.

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Yes, it had to happen. Steve Jackson – the designer of OGRE, G.E.V., and THE FANTASY TRIP – is now in business on his own. An independent publisher. Designing the kind of games you want to play – and producing them with the quality you'd expect from far more expensive packages. Full-color maps and covers . . . illustrated rules . . . multi-color counters . . . at $3 per game! Read on . . .

RAID ON IRAN



Can you free the hostages?

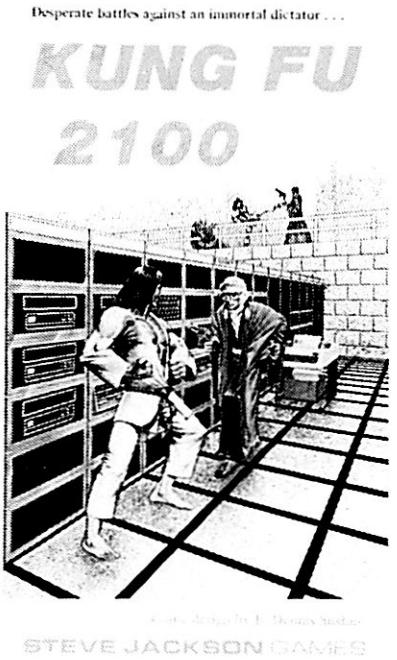
A simulation game about the U.S. raid into Tehran. If the raid had gone in, Special Forces teams would have battled Iranian fanatics – with the hostages' lives in the balance. An alternate scenario explores the possibility that the *Ayatollah* might have been the raid's target.

Rules cover U.S. surprise, mob action, helicopter breakdown (of course!), undercover aid, panicked/berserk militants, and more. For one or two players; playing time under 90 minutes.

RAID ON IRAN includes a full-color 16" x 21" map of the embassy grounds, 119 counters in 3 colors, illustrated rules sheet, and tables.

Game design by Steve Jackson.

KUNG FU 2100



For years the CloneMasters have ruled the world. Their only foes are the Terminators – trained from birth in the martial arts. Now *you* are a Terminator. With only two companions, you must smash your way into the fortress of the CloneMaster – to destroy him forever.

But his guards are many and loyal. Like you, they can kill with a single blow. And time is against you . . .

KUNG FU 2100 includes 114 counters in 3 colors; 16" x 21" rules sheet; 10" x 21" color map; extra CRT and record sheets; ziplock bag. For 1 or 2 players; plays in under 1½ hours.

Designed by B. Dennis Sustare. Edited by Steve Jackson and Forrest Johnson.

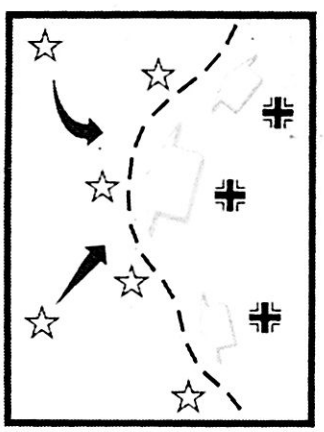
CARDBOARD HEROES

FULL-COLOR 25mm miniatures – printed on heavy card stock. Each figure folds to form its own base. Front facing is shown on one side (see above); rear facing is on the reverse.

Your fantasy battles will have all the detail and excitement of miniatures – without the cost, weight, and painting hassle of metal figures. And you'll seldom see ANY miniatures as beautifully colored and detailed as these.

Set 1 has the heroes for all your games: men, elves, dwarves, halflings, fighters, wizards, clerics, thieves . . . 40 figures in all . . . only $3.

ONE-PAGE BULGE



It started as a challenge: Design a good wargame with *only one page* of rules. ONE-PAGE BULGE met the challenge! A regimental-level simulation of the Battle of the Bulge – with complete, detailed rules – including weather and Allied air superiority, German supply and isolation, and optional rules for bridge destruction and capture of Allied supplies.

Components include 16" x 13" full-color map, 112 counters in 3 colors, turn record track with CRT, ziplock bag, and *one page* (8" x 11", both sides) of rules. For 1 or 2 players; playing time 1 to 2 hours.

Game design by Steve Jackson.

Please send me the following: ( ) RAID ON IRAN ( ) KUNG FU 2100 ( ) ONE-PAGE BULGE ( ) CARDBOARD HEROES. I have enclosed $3 for each item, plus 25 cents per item for 3rd class postage, or 50 cents per item for 1st class postage. Texas residents please add 5% sales tax.

Please allow 2 weeks for 1st class, or 4-6 weeks for 3rd class. Sorry – we cannot accept retail orders from outside the US and Canada at present. Hobby store and distributor inquiries invited.

Name . . . . . .

Address . . . . . .

City . . . . . *State* . . . . . *Zip* . . . . . .

I am paying by ( ) check ( ) money order ( )credit card. Total enclosed . . . . . .

CHARGE ORDERS (please do not charge purchases under $10)

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BOX 18957-T AUSTIN, TX 78760

Subscribers to THE SPACE GAMER get free postage on game orders. If you subscribe to TSG, use the order form on your mailer cover or include your mailing label. Or subscribe now ($21 for 12 monthly issues, $39 for 24 issues) – and your game postage is free.

They're Only Metal . . .

Hi. We're here to tell you about the latest miniature made by the men from Mars. It's a dragon. A BIG dragon. And it looks so real, you'd think it was about to get up and walk off.

(Forest, can you get that thing to hold still for a second? The photographer's having trouble getting it focused.)

It's the biggest miniature Martian Metals has ever made. It comes in seven pieces. Fully assembled, it's 10½" long, 4½" wide, and 3½" high. It weighs . . .

(I can't get a good weight. It keeps wiggling around on the scale.)

Never mind how much it weighs.

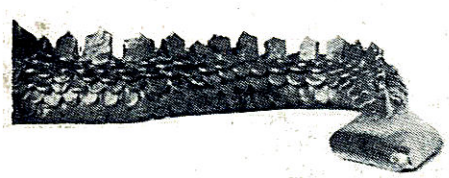
Normal retail value for this lifelike chunk of metal would be $25.00. But you can't get it for cash. You've got to buy it the Martian way . . . with doshes.

(Forest, if that thing sets fire to my desk I won't be able to finish this ad. You want a big Martian Metals blank space on the back of SPACE GAMER?)

How do you get doshes? Simple. Just look at the back of a DRAGONSLAYERS™ card. The DRAGONSLAYERS line of miniatures is, by an incredible coincidence, also sold by Martian Metals. They're just as detailed as the dragon. But not as big.

Take a look at the picture below. Then start saving your doshes. That dragon is so real, you'd think it was alive. But that's ridiculous. It's only metal.

(He had the picture all set up, and the thing jumped right off the table. I think it's under the bookcase. Did you get a shot? Just the tail? Aw, come on. We can't run a picture of a dragon's tail. Here, dragon. Here, boy. Hey, Forest! What does this thing eat? Maybe we can lure it out . . .)



Ad concept/design by Steve Jackson

Martian Metals

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